



DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

DIONYSIUS
THE AREOPAGITE

THE DIVINE NAMES
and
THE MYSTICAL
THEOLOGY

TRANSLATED BY
C E ROLT

SPCK

First published in the series
Translations of Christian Literature, 1927

New Edition 1940
Tenth Impression 1963

SPCK
Holy Trinity Church
Mandeville Road
London NW1 4DU

Printed in Great Britain by
Spottiswoode Ballantyne Ltd
Colchester and London

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PREFACE

THE translations of which the present volume consists are the work of a scholar who died at the age of thirty-seven. It has been felt that since the translator did not live to write a preface his work should be introduced by a few prefatory words. My excuse for accepting that office is that I probably knew the lamented writer as well as any one living. He was deprived of both his parents while very young, left almost friendless, and entrusted to my care from the age of fourteen. He had already shown promise of unusual ability. I sent him to King's College School, where in the opinion of its distinguished Head, the Rev Dr Bourne, he could have done anything if only he had been given the health. At Oxford he was awarded the Liddon Studentship.

Nothing can show more clearly what was thought of him by competent judges in Oxford than the following letter written by the Professor of Latin, A. C. Clark :

"He was one of the best scholars who passed through my hands at Queen's College, and I know no one who made greater progress after coming into residence. In those early days he had wonderful powers of work. I was seldom so delighted as when he earned the great distinction of being 'mentioned' for the Hertford University Scholarship in Latin. At the time everything seemed to be within his grasp. But most unfortunately his health failed shortly afterwards, and he was never able to do himself justice. Still, of recent years he wrote a remarkable book, full of fine thought, brilliantly expressed, which was much admired by good judges. I well remember, too, his Latin sermon preached at St. Mary's not long ago. It was

delivered with feeling and fire, and seemed to me an admirable performance. I am sure that he would have gained distinction in the Church, if he had lived.

"He seemed to me a fine and noble character, free from all mortal taint."

He was a singularly refined and religious character, combining the acuteness of a philosophic mind with the fervour of a mystic. He therefore possessed undoubted qualifications for a study of Dionysius, with whose neo-Platonic ideas and mystical tendencies he was in the warmest sympathy.

The Introduction, containing a masterly exposition of Dionysian principles, is entirely the translator's work, and, within the limits which he set himself, may be called complete. Rolt's fervid and enthusiastic disposition led him to expound Dionysius with increasing admiration as his studies continued. He laid his original introduction aside, because to his maturer judgment it seemed insufficiently appreciative.

In its final form the Introduction is beyond all question a very able and remarkable piece of work. There are, however, several instances where the writer's enthusiasm and personal opinions have led him to unguarded language, or disabled him from realizing the dangers to which the Areopagite's teaching tends. He does indeed distinctly admit that Dionysius has his dangers, and says in one place definitely that the study of him is for the few—but the bearing of the whole theory of the Supra-Personal Deity on the Person of Christ and the Christian doctrine of the Atonement requires to be more thoroughly defined than is done in the exceedingly able pages of Rolt's Introduction. It is not the business of an editor to express his own views, but yet it seems only reasonable that he should call the reader's attention to questionable expositions, or to dogmatic statements which seem erroneous. In four or five places the editor has ventured to do this—with what effect the reader must decide. The Introduction of course appears exactly as the Author left it. The few additional remarks are bracketed as notes by themselves.

It is only right to add that the translator laboured under certain disadvantages. The original text of Dionysius is perplexing and confused, and no modern critical edition has as yet been produced. Rolt was frequently in doubt what the Author had really written.

But, beside the drawback incidental to any student of Dionysius, there was the fact of the translator's solitary position at Watermillock, a village rectory among the Lakes, shut off from access to libraries, and from acquaintance with former writers on his subject. This is a defect of which the translator was well aware, and of which he pathetically complained. Friends endeavoured to some extent to supply him with the necessary books, but the lack of reference to the literature of the subject will not escape the reader of these pages. He was always an independent thinker rather than a person of historical investigation.

Hence it is that one branch of his subject was almost omitted, namely, the influence of Dionysius on the history of Christian thought. This aspect is far too important to be left out. Indeed Dionysius cannot be critically valued without it. An attempt therefore has been made to supply this omission in a separate Essay, in order to place the reader in possession of the principal facts, both concerning the Areopagite's disciples and critics.

W J S-S

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	V
By W. J SPARROW-SIMPSON, D D	
INTRODUCTION—	
1 THE AUTHOR	I
2 HIS LEADING IDEAS. THE NATURE OF THE GODHEAD IN ITSELF	4
3 ITS RELATION TO CREATION	6
4 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL	20
5 CONTEMPLATION	25
6 DIONYSIUS AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY	30
7 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTEMPLATION	33
8 THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS OF DIONYSIUS'S DOCTRINES	40
9 CONCLUSION	44
10 BIBLIOGRAPHY	47
THE DIVINE NAMES	50
THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY	191
THE INFLUENCE OF DIONYSIUS IN RELIGIOUS HISTORY (BY W J SPARROW-SIMPSON, D D)	202
INDEX	221-223

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

INTRODUCTION

I—THE AUTHOR AND HIS INFLUENCE IN THE LATER CHURCH

THE writings here translated are among the extant works of a theologian who professes to be St. Paul's Athenian convert Dionysius, and points his claim with a background of historical setting. But the claim collapses beneath a considerable weight of anachronisms, by far the chief of which is the later neo-Platonism in almost every paragraph. In fact, these writings appear to reflect, and even to quote, the doctrines of the Pagan philosopher Proclus, who began lecturing at Athens in A.D. 430. Moreover, it is probable that the Hierotheus, who figures so largely in them, is the Syrian mystic Stephen bar Sudaili, a later contemporary of the same thinker. The Dionysian writings may therefore be placed near the very end of the fifth century.

The true name of their author is entirely unknown. He was probably a monk, possibly a bishop, certainly an ecclesiastic of some sort. His home is believed to have been Syria, where speculative theology was daring and untrammelled, and his works are the chief among the very few surviving specimens of an important school. The pious fraud by which he fathered them upon the Areopagite need not be branded with the harsh name of "forgery," for such a practice was

in his day permitted and even considered laudable. Nor does it rob them of their value, any more than certain parts of the prophecies ascribed to Isaiah are worthless because they are by another hand. If the Dionysian writings were historical documents the matter would be otherwise, just as the Gospel Narrative would lose nearly all its value if it were a later fabrication. But they are not historical documents. Their scope is with the workings of man's mind and spirit in a region that does not change, and their findings are equally valid or invalid whatever be their date. And yet even historically they have an interest which does not depend on their authorship. For, in any case, they spring from a certain reputable school within the Christian Church, and they were accepted by the Church at large. And thus their bold path of contemplation and philosophy is at least permissible to Christians. This path is not for all men, but some are impelled to seek it, and if it is denied them within the Christian pale, they will go and look for it elsewhere. Nietzsche is but one of those who have thus disastrously wandered afar in search of that which is actually to be found within the fold. Had he but studied the Dionysian writings he might have remained a Christian. At the present time these works have an added interest in the fact that, since neo-Platonism has strong affinities with the ancient philosophies of India, and may even owe something directly to that source through the sojourn of Plotinus in the Punjab, such writings as these may help the Church to meet with discriminating sympathy certain Indian teachings which are now becoming too familiar in the West to be altogether ignored. The bearings of this matter on the missionary problem are obvious.

The first mention of "Dionysius" (to give him by courtesy the name he takes upon himself) is in the

year 533, when, at a council held in Constantinople, Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, appealed to these writings in support of Monophysite teaching. In spite of this unpromising beginning they soon acquired a great reputation; indeed, they presumably possessed some authority already when this first recorded appeal to them was made. They were widely read in the Eastern Church, being elucidated by the Commentary of St. Maximus in the seventh century and the Paraphrase of the learned Greek scholar, Pachymeres, in the thirteenth or fourteenth. Through Erigena's Latin translation in the ninth century they penetrated to the Western Church, and were so eagerly welcomed in this country that (in the words of the old chronicler), "The Mystical Divinity ran across England like deer" They are often quoted with reverence by St. Thomas Aquinas, and were, indeed, the chief of the literary forces moulding the mystical theology of Christendom. Ruysbroeck slaked his thirst at their deep well, and so they provided a far greater than their author with stimulus and an articulate philosophy. Were this their only service they would have the highest claims on our gratitude.

But they have an intrinsic value of their own in spite of their obvious defects. And if their influence has too often led to certain spiritual excesses, yet this influence would not have been felt at all had they not met a deep spiritual want. It arose not merely on account of their reputed authorship but also because the hungering heart of man found here some hidden manna. This manna, garnished though it be in all these writings with strange and often untranslatable terms from the Pagan Mysteries and from later neo-Platonism, is yet in itself a plain and nourishing spiritual meat. Let us now try to discover its quality from the two treatises before us.

II—HIS LEADING IDEAS THE NATURE OF THE GODHEAD IN ITSELF

The basis of their teaching is the doctrine of the Super-Essential Godhead (*ὑπερουσίος θεαρχία*). We must, therefore, at the very outset fix the meaning of this term. Now the word "Essence" or "Being" (*οὐσία*) means almost invariably an individual existence, more especially a person, since such is the highest type that individual existence can in this world assume. And, in fact, like the English word "Being," it may without qualification be used to mean an angel. Since, then, the highest connotation of the term "Essence" or "Being" is a person, it follows that by "Super-Essence" is intended "Supra-Personality." And hence the doctrine of the Super-Essential Godhead simply means that God is, in His ultimate Nature, Supra-Personal.

Now an individual person is one who distinguishes himself from the rest of the world. I am a person because I can say "I am I and I am not you." Personality thus consists in the faculty of knowing oneself to be one individual among others. And thus, by its very nature, Personality is (on one side of its being, at least) a finite thing. The very essence of my personal state lies in the fact that I am not the whole universe but a member thereof.

God, on the other hand, is Supra-Personal because He is infinite. He is not one Being among others, but in His ultimate nature dwells on a plane where there is nothing whatever beside Himself. The only kind of consciousness we may attribute to Him is what can but be described as an Universal Consciousness. He does not distinguish Himself from us, for were we caught up on to that level we should be wholly transformed into Him. And yet we dis-

tinguish between ourselves and Him because from our lower plane of finite Being we look up and see that ultimate level beyond us

The Super-Essential Godhead is, in fact, precisely that which modern philosophy describes as the Absolute. Behind the diversities of this world there must be an Ultimate Unity. And this Ultimate Unity must contain in an undifferentiated condition all the riches of consciousness, life, and existence which are dispersed in broken fragments throughout the world. Yet It is not a particular Consciousness or a particular Existence. It is certainly not Unconscious, Dead or, in the ordinary sense, non-Existent, for all these terms imply something below instead of above the states to which they are opposed.

Nevertheless It is not, in Its Ultimate Nature, conscious (as we understand the term) for consciousness implies a state in which the thinking Subject is aware of himself and so becomes an Object of his own perception. And this is impossible in the ultimate Nature of the Undifferentiated Godhead where there is no distinction between thinking Subject and Object of thought, simply because there is at that level no distinction of any kind whatever. Similarly the Godhead does not, in the ordinary sense, live (for life is a process and hence implies distinctions) nor does It even (in our sense) exist, for Existence is contrasted with non-Existence and thus implies relationship and distinctions. Consciousness, Life, and Existence, as we know them, are finite states, and the Infinite Godhead is beyond them. We cannot even, strictly speaking, attribute to It Unity, for Unity is distinguished from Plurality. We must instead describe It as a Super-Unity which is neither One nor Many and yet contains in an undifferentiated state that Numerical Principle which we can only grasp in its partial forms as Unity and Plurality.

III.—THE RELATION OF THE GODHEAD TO CREATION

This principle of Plurality which is thus transcendently contained in Its Undifferentiated Nature compels It to an eternal act of Creation. For all things pre-exist in It fused and yet distinct, as (shall we say?) in a single sensation of hunger there are indivisibly felt the several needs for the different elements of food which are wanted respectively to nourish the various kinds of bodily tissues, or as a single emotion contains beforehand the different separate words which issue forth to express it. Even so the Ultimate Godhead, brimful with Its Super-Unity, must overflow into multiplicity, must pass from Indifference into Differentiation and must issue out of its Super-Essential state to fashion a world of Being.

Now since the Godhead thus pours Itself out on to the plane of Being (which plane itself exists through nothing but this outpouring), it follows that the Godhead comes into relation with this plane or rather (inasmuch as the act is timeless) stands in some relation to it. If the Godhead acts creatively, then It is related to the world and sphere of creation eternally to the sphere of creation (which otherwise could not exist), and thus potentially to the world even before the world was made. Hence the Godhead, while in Its ultimate Nature It is beyond all differentiations and relationships, and dwells in a region where there is nothing outside of Itself, yet on another side of Its Nature (so to speak) touches and embraces a region of differentiations and relationships, is therefore Itself related to that region, and so in a sense belongs to it. Ultimately the Godhead is undifferentiated and unrelated, but in Its eternal created activity It is manifested under the

form of Differentiation and Relationship It belongs concurrently to two worlds : that of Ultimate Reality and that of Manifested Appearance. Hence, therefore, the possibility not only of Creation but also Revelation (ἐκφανσις). Just as the Godhead creates all things by virtue of that Aspect of Its Nature which is (as it were) turned towards them, so It is revealed to us by virtue of the same Aspect turned towards our minds which form part of the creation. Hence all the Scriptural Names of God, and this very Name "God" itself, though they apply to the whole Nature of the Godhead and not merely to some particular element or function thereof, yet cannot express that Nature in Its Ultimate Super-essence but only as manifested in Its relative activity. Dionysius, in fact, definitely teaches that doctrine which, when revived independently of recent years by Dr Bradley was regarded as a startling blasphemy. that God is but an Appearance¹ of the Absolute. And this is, after all, merely a bold way of stating the orthodox truism that the Ultimate Godhead is incomprehensible a truism which Theology accepts as an axiom and then is prone to ignore. The various Names of God are thus mere inadequate symbols of That Which transcends all thought and existence. But they are undifferentiated titles because they are symbols which seek (though unsuccessfully) to express the undifferentiated Super-Essence. Though the terms "God," "King," "Good," "Existent," etc., have all different connotations, yet they all denote the same undifferentiated Deity. There are, however, some Names which denote not the undifferentiated Godhead, but certain eternally differentiated Elements in Its Manifestation. These are the Names of the Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity. Whereas the terms "God," "King," "Good," "Existent," etc.,

¹ *Appearance and Reality* (2nd ed), pp 445ff

denote (though they cannot express it) the same Reality. the term "Father" denotes something different from that of "Son," and both of these from that of "Holy Ghost." The whole Manifested Godhead is "God," "King," "Creator," "Saviour," "Lord," "Eternal," "Living," etc., but only One *Persona* of the Godhead is Father, or Son, or Holy Ghost. The undifferentiated titles differ from each other merely through our feeble grasp of the Manifestation, and coalesce as our apprehension of it grows, the differentiated titles (*διακεκριμένα* or *διαφάσεις*) represent actual distinctions in the eternal Manifestation Itself. Thus the Absolute Godhead is the Super-Essence, the eternally Manifested Godhead is the Trinity. As to the reasons of this Dionysius deprecates all inquiry. He does not, for instance, suggest that Relationship in this its simplest form cannot but exist within that side of the Godhead which embraces and enters into this relative world. Here, as elsewhere, his purpose in spite of his philosophical language, is in the deepest sense purely practical, and mere speculations are left on one side. He accepts the Eternal Distinctions of the Trinity because They have been revealed; on the other hand, he sees that they must belong to the sphere of Manifestation or They could not be revealed.

It was said above that the Ultimate Godhead is Supra-Personal, and that it is Supra-Personal because personality consists in the faculty of knowing oneself to be one individual among others. Are the *Personæ* of the Trinity then, personal, since They are distinguished One from Another? No, They are not personal, because, being the infinite Manifestation of the Godhead, They are Super-Essential, and Dionysius describes Them by that title. And if it be urged that in one place he joins the same title

to our Lord's individual Human Name and speaks of "the Super-Essential Jesus," this is because the Personality of our Lord (and our own personality also through our union with Him) passes up into a region transcending personality, and hence while the Humanity of Jesus is Personal His Godhead is Supra-Personal. This is implied in a passage from Hierotheus (quoted with approval by Dionysius himself) which teaches that the Deity of Jesus is of an universal character belonging through Him to all redeemed mankind.

The teaching of Dionysius on the Trinity is, so far as it goes, substantially the same as that of St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas, only it is expressed in more exact, if at first sight somewhat fantastic, terms. St. Augustine,¹ for instance, teaches that the inner Differentiations of the Trinity belong

¹ [Augustine says indeed that the Father and the Son exist, *non secundum substantiam, sed secundum relativum* (*De Trin.* v 6). But Augustine's argument is, that while no attribute of God is accidental, yet all attributes are not said with reference to His substance. Certain attributes of God are neither accidental nor substantial, but relative. This applies to Divine Fatherhood and Sonship. For the Father is what He is in relation to the Son, and similarly the Son to the Father. But these are relations of "Beings," and are relations which are "eternal and unchangeable." Augustine does not affirm a supra-personal reality of God behind the Trinity of manifestation. For Augustine the Father and the Son are ultimate realities. "But if the Father, in that He is called the Father, were so called in relation to Himself, not to the Son, and the Son, in that He is called the Son, were so called in relation to Himself, not to the Father, then both the one would be called Father, and the other Son, according to substance. But because the Father is not called the Father except in that He has a Son, and the Son is not called Son except in that He has a Father, these things are not said according to substance, because each of them is not so called in relation to Himself, but the terms are used reciprocally and in relation each to the other, nor yet according to accident, because both the being called the Father, and the being called the Son, is eternal and unchangeable to them. Wherefore, although to be the Father and to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different, because they are so called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not accident, because it is not changeable."—Aug., *De Trin.* v 6 —ED.]

solely to the realm of eternal Manifestation when he says that They exist *secundum Relativum* and not *secundum Substantiam*¹ Also he teaches the Supra-Personality of the Trinity when he says that neither the undivided Trinity nor any of Its Three Persons is a particular individuality,² and St. Thomas teaches the same thing when he says that the Human Soul of Jesus does not comprehend or contain the Word since the Human Soul is finite (*i.e.* a particular individuality) while the Word is Infinite.³

Thus while in the Undifferentiated Godhead the "Persons" of the Trinity ultimately transcend Themselves and point (as it were) to a region where They are merged, yet in that side of Its Nature which looks towards the universe They shine eternally forth and are the effulgence of those "Supernal Rays" through Which all light is given us, and whence all energy streams into the act of creation For by Their interaction They circulate that Super-Essence Which Each of Them perfectly possesses, and so It passes forth from Them into a universe of Being

Now the Godhead, while It is beyond all particular Being, yet contains and is the ultimate Reality of all particular Being, for It contains beforehand all the particular creatures after a manner in which they are ultimately identical with It, as seems to be implied by the phrase that all things exist in It fused and yet distinct. Thus although It is not *a* particular being, It in a transcendent manner contains and *is* Particularity Again It is beyond all universal Being, for universals are apprehended by the intellect,

¹ *De Trin* v 6

² See *De Trin* viii. 4. "Not this and that Good, but the very Good Not a good Personality (*animus*) but good Goodness", and vii. 11, where he condemns those who say the word *persona* is employed "in the sense of a particular man such as Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, or anybody else who can be pointed out as being present"

³ *Summa*, Pars III Q. x. Art. i

whereas the Godhead is incomprehensible and therefore is described as "formless" Nevertheless It contains and is the Ultimate Reality of all universals, for, even before the world was made, It eternally embraced and embraces all things and all the universal laws of their existence Thus after a transcendent manner It contains and is Universality And hence in Its transcendent Nature Universality and Particularity are contained as one and the same undifferentiated Fact.

But in this world of Being the particular and the universal aspect of things must be mutually distinguished Otherwise there could, on the one hand, be no things, and on the other, no bond of unity between them. Hence, when the Super-Essence overflows in the act of creation, It runs, as it were, into the two main streams of Universal and Particular Being Neither of these two streams has any independent or concrete existence Taken separately, they are mere potentialities - two separate aspects, as it were, of the creative impulse, implying an eternal possibility of creation and an eternal tendency towards it, and yet not in themselves creative because not in themselves, strictly speaking, existent Nevertheless these two streams differ each from each, and one of them has a degree of reality which does not belong to the other Mere universal Being, says Dionysius, does not possess full or concrete existence, at the same time, since it *is* Being or Existence, he does not call it non-existent. Mere Particularity, on the other hand, he practically identifies with Non-entity, for the obvious reason that non-existence itself is a universal category (as applying to all existent things), and, therefore, cannot belong to that which has no universal element at all Thus the universal stream is an abstract ideal and possesses an abstract existence, the particular stream is an abortive impulse and

possesses no actual existence whatever The one is the formal law of the existence universe, the other its rough material

Thus these two emanating streams of potentiality have, from before all time, eternally welled forth and passed away, the universal into emptiness and the particular into nothingness, or rather, through nothingness back at once into the Super-Essence in a ceaseless revolution which, until the appointed moment arrives for Time and the temporal world to begin, leaves no trace outside Its Super-Essential Source and Dwelling and Goal. It is possible (though one cannot say more), that Dionysius is thinking especially of the difference between these two streams when he describes the various motions of the Godhead. The Particular stream of Emanation may be in his mind when he speaks of the circular movement, since the particular existences remain within the Super-Essence, until the moment of their temporal creation the Universal stream may be that of which he is thinking when he speaks of the direct and spiral movements, since both of these indicate an advance and would therefore be appropriate to express the out-raying tendency of that emanating Influence which, even before the particular creatures were made, had a kind of existence for thought as the other stream had not

This Universal stream consists of currents or Emanations, Very Being, Very Life, etc. (*αὐτοεῖναι, αὐτοζωή, κ τ λ.*), and of these currents some are more universal than others, Very Being is, obviously, the most universal of all And since the Super-Essence transcends and so absorbs all Universality, it follows that the more universal the Emanations are the higher is their nature This stream, in fact, runs, as it were, in the channel which our thought naturally traces, for thought cannot but seek for universals,

and the abstract and bloodless tendency of mere Philosophy comes from an undue exaltation of thought over life. From this defect, however, Dionysius is free. For, while he holds that the highest Emanation is the most universal, he also holds (as was seen) that the Emanations are in themselves the mere background of existence and are not fully existent. And he expressly says that while the Emanations become more and more universal the higher we ascend towards their Source, the creatures become more and more individual and particular the higher they rise in the scale. The reason is, of course, that the Super-Essence transcends and absorbs all Particularity as well as all Universality, and hence it is that particular things become particularized by partaking of It, just as universals become universalized by a similar process. But of this more anon.

This Universal stream of Emanations thus eternally possesses a kind of existence, but it is an empty existence, like the emptiness of mere light if there were no objects to fill it and be made visible. The light in such a case would still be streaming forth from the sun and could not do otherwise, and therefore it would not be an utter void, but it would be untenanted by any particular colour or shape. Suppose, however, that the light could be blotted out. There would now remain the utter void of absolute darkness. Such darkness cannot exist while the sun is shining in the cloudless heavens, nevertheless the very notion of light cannot but be contrasted in our minds with that of darkness which is its absence, and so we conceive the light to be a positive thing which fills the darkness even as water fills a void. When the bowl is full of water, the void does not exist, and yet, since it would exist if the bowl could be wholly emptied, we can regard this non-existent void as the receptacle of the water.

Even so the Emanations of Very Being, etc., fill, as it were, a void which does not and cannot exist, since it is, and must be, saturated with them, and yet it is, by the very laws of our thinking, contrasted with them and would, in a manner, exist if the Emanations could cease to flow from the Super-Essence. They, streaming eternally (as they must) from that overflowing Source, permeate the whole boundless region of the world that is to be, a region beyond Time and Space. That region is thus their receptacle. The receptacle, if emptied of them (though this is impossible), would contain nothing, and be nothing whatsoever. Hence, it is called Not-Being, or the Non-Existent ($\tau\acute{o} \mu\eta \delta\upsilon$).

So the two Streams flow timelessly without beginning and without end, and cross, but do not mingle. The Universal Stream perpetually advancing and the Particular Stream circling round and slipping through it, as it were, into the void of Nothingness (as a thing by its very nature invisible, would be in darkness even while surrounded by the light) and so returning into the Super-Essence without leaving a trace behind it. This activity, though it must be expressed thus in terms of Time, is really timeless and therefore simultaneous. For the Streams are not something other than the Super-Essence. They are simply distant aspects of It. They are the Super-Essence in Its creative activity. As the river flowing out of a lake consists of the water which belongs to the lake, or as the light and heat flowing from the sun are the same light and heat that are in the sun, so the emanating Streams are the same Power that exists in the Super-Essence, though now acting (or striving to act) at a distance. Or perhaps we may compare the Super-Essence to a mountain of rich ore, the inward depths of which are hidden beyond sight and touch. The outer surface, however, is touched and

seen, and this corresponds to the Persons of the Trinity, while the same mountain viewed at a distance is the Stream of Universal Emanation. And though the view becomes dimmer and dimmer the farther away you go, yet it is always the same mountain itself that is being viewed. The Particular Stream, on the other hand, is like the same mountain when invisible at night, for the mountain still sends forth its vibrations, but these are lost in the darkness.

Or we may compare the Super-Essence to a magnet and the Persons of the Trinity to its tangible surface, and the two emanating Streams to the positive and negative magnetism which are simply the essence of the magnet present (so to speak) at a distance. Even so (but in a manner which is truer because non-spatial) the Super-Essence is in the emanating streams outside the Super-Essential plane and thus interpenetrates regions which are remote from Itself. It is both immanent in the world as its Principle of Being and outside it as transcending all categories of Being. This contradiction is implied in the very word "Emanation" (*πρόοδος*) which means an act by which the Super-Essence goes forth from Itself. And, in fact, Dionysius more than once definitely says that the Super-Essence actually passes outside of Itself even while It remains all the time wholly within itself. This he expresses in one place by saying that the act of Creation is an ecstasy of Divine Love. This thought is vital to his doctrine, and must be remembered whenever in the present attempt to expound him, the Super-Essence is spoken of as "outside" the creatures. The Super-Essence is not, strictly speaking, external to anything. But It is "outside" the creatures because (as existing simultaneously on two planes) It is "outside" Itself. And therefore, although the entire plane of creation is interpenetrated by It, yet in Its ultimate Nature It is

beyond that plane and so "outside" it. Finite creatures though filled (according to their measure) with Its Presence, yet must, in so far as they are finite, look up to It as That which is Other than themselves. And, in this sense of being Other than they are, It must be described as "outside" them, even though (as their Principle of Being) It is within them.

Thus the two emanating streams, though they pass outside of the Super-Essence, yet actually are the Super-Essence Itself. And, in fact, the very term Emanation (*πρόοδος*) like the collateral term Differentiation (*διάκρισις*) may even be applied not only to the two Streams but also to the Persons of the Trinity, not only to the Magnets radiating Energy, so to speak, but also to its actual Surface.

This matter needs a few words of explanation.

There is in the undifferentiated (*ὑπερνωμένη*) Super-Essence a Differentiation between the Three Divine "Persons," which Dionysius compares to the distinction between different flames in the same indivisible brightness. And Each "Person" is an Emanation because Each is a Principle of outgoing creative Energy. There is also a Differentiation between the various qualities and forces of the creative Energy, rather as (if we may further work out the simile of Dionysius) the light seen afar through certain atmospheric conditions is differentiated into various colours. And each quality or force is an Emanation, for it is an outgoing current of creative Energy. Or, by a slightly different use of language, the entire creative process in which they flow forth may be called not merely a collection of emanations but simply "the Emanation." Thus an Emanation may mean, (1) a Person of the Trinity, (2) a current of the Universal Stream (*e.g.*, Very Being, or Very Life, etc.); (3) a current of the Particular Stream (*i.e.*

a particular force), (4) the entire process whereby the two Streams flow forth. This sounds confusing, but the difficulty vanishes if we classify these various meanings under two heads, viz (1) an Emanating Principle (i.e. a "Person" of the Trinity), and (2) an Emanating Act (whether regarded as a whole or in detail) This classification covers all its uses

These two heads, in fact, correspond exactly to the two main uses of the word "Differentiation" as applying respectively to the Super-Essential sphere and to the sphere of Being. And here Dionysius certainly does cause needless difficulty by employing the same word "Differentiation" with these two distinct meanings in the same passage The Persons of the Trinity are differentiated, but the Energy streaming from them is undifferentiated in the sense that it comes indivisibly from them all. In another sense, however, it is differentiated because it splits up into separate currents and forces Each of these currents comes from the Undivided Trinity, and yet each current is distinct from the others Dionysius expresses this truth by saying that the Godhead enters Undividedly into Differentiation, or becomes differentiated without loss of Undifference (*ἡνωμένως διακρίνεται*)

Let us follow this creative process and see whither it leads The Super-Essence, as It transcends both Non-Existence and Existence, also transcends both Time and Eternity But from afar It is seen or felt as Existence and as Eternity That is to say Existence and Eternity are two emanating modes or qualities of the Universal Stream The Particular Stream, on the other hand, is Time-non-existent as yet and struggling to come to the birth but unable to do so until it gain permanence through mingling with Eternity At a certain point, however (preordained in the Super-Essence wherein Time

slumbered), the two streams not only cross but actually mingle, and thus Time and the temporal world begin. The Particular stream no longer sinks wholly through the Universal, but is in part supported by it. Hence the world of things arises like a substance hitherto invisible but now becoming visible, and so, by this change, springing out of darkness into light.

Now, when the Particular stream begins to mingle with the Universal, it naturally mingles first with that current of it which, being most universal, ranks the highest and so is nearest the Source. It is only along that current that it can advance to the others which are further away. And that current is Being (*αἰσ-εῖναι*). Thus the world-process begins (as Dionysius had learnt from Genesis and from the teaching of Plato) as the level of dead solid matter, to which he gives the name of "merely existent" (*οὐσιωδής*). Thence, by participating more and more in the Universal stream, it advances to the production of plant and animal and man, being by the process enriched with more and more qualities as Life (*αὐτοζωή*), Wisdom (*αὐτοσοφία*), and the other currents of the Universal stream begin to permeate it one by one.

Thus the separate individuals, according to the various laws (*νόμοι*) of their genera and species, are created in this world of Time. And each thing, while it exists in the world, has two sides to its existence—one, outside its created being (according to the sense of the word "outside" explained above), in the Super-Essence wherein all things are One Thing (as all points meet at infinity or as according to the neo-Platonic simile used by Dionysius, the radii of a circle meet at the centre), and the other within its own created being on this lower plane where all things are separate from each other (as all points in space are separate or as the radii of the circle are separate

at the circumference). This paradox is of the very utmost importance.

The various kinds of existences being now created in this world of time, we can regard them as ranged in an ascending scale between Nothingness and the Super-Essence, each rank of being subsuming the qualities of those that lie below it. Thus we get the following system in ascending order Existence, Life, Sensation, Reason, Spirit And it is to this scale that Dionysius alludes when he speaks of the extremities and the intermediate parts of the creation, meaning by the extremities the highest and the lowest orders, and by the intermediate parts the remainder

The diminution of Being which we find in glancing down the ladder is, Dionysius tells us, no defect in the system of creation It is right that a stone should be but a stone and a tree no more than a tree Each thing, being itself however lowly, is fulfilling the laws of its kind which pre-exist (after a transcendent manner) in the undifferentiated Super-Essence. If, however, there is a diminution of Being where such diminution has no place, then trouble begins to arise. This is, in fact, the origin and nature of evil For as we ascend the scale of Being, fresh laws at each stage counteract the laws of the stage below, the law of life by which the blood circulates and living things grow upwards counteracting the mere law of inert gravitation, and again, the laws of morality counteracting the animal passions And where this counter-action fails, disaster follows A hindered circulation means ill-health, and a hindered self-control means sin Whereas a stone is merely lifeless, a corpse is not only lifeless but dead, and whereas a brute is un-moral, a brutal man is wicked, or immoral What in the one case is the absence from a thing of that which has no proper place in it, is in the other case the failure of the thing's proper virtues

IV—THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

At wearisome length Dionysius discusses the problem of evil and shows that nothing is inherently bad. For existence is in itself good (as coming ultimately from the Super-Essence), and all things are therefore good in so far as they exist. Since evil is ultimately non-existent, a totally evil thing would be simply non-existent, and thus the evil in the world, wherever it becomes complete, annihilates itself and that wherein it lodges. We may illustrate this thought by the nature of zero in mathematics, which is non-entity (since, added to numbers, it makes no difference) and yet has an annihilating force (since it reduces to zero all numbers that are multiplied by it). Even so evil is nothing and yet manifests itself in the annihilation of the things it qualifies. That which we call evil in the world is merely a tendency of things towards nothingness. Thus sickness is a tendency towards death, and death is simply the cessation of physical vitality. And sin is a tendency towards spiritual death, which is the cessation of spiritual vitality. But, since the ground of the soul is indestructible, a complete cessation of its being is impossible, and hence even the devils are not inherently bad. Were they such they would cease *ipso facto* to exist.

Dionysius here touches incidentally on a mystical doctrine which, as developed by later writers, afterwards attained the greatest importance. This doctrine of a timeless self is the postulate, perhaps, of all Christian mysticism. The boldest expression of it is to be found in Eckhart and his disciple Tauler, who both say that even the lost souls in hell retain unaltered the ultimate nobility of their being. And lest this doctrine should be thought to trifle with

grave matters, be it remembered that the sinfulness and gravity of sin are simply due to this indestructible nobility of our being. Man cannot become non-moral, and hence his capacity for wickedness. The soul is potentially divine, and therefore may be actually satanic. The very devils in hell cannot destroy the image of the Godhead within them, and it is this image that sin defiles.

It follows from the ultimate non-entity of evil that, in so far as it exists, it can only do so through being mingled with some element of good. To take an illustration given by Dionysius himself, where there is disease there is vitality, for when life ceases the sickness disappears in death. The ugliness of evil lies precisely in the fact that it always, somehow or other, consists in the corruption of something inherently good.

It is, however, this ugliness of things that Dionysius fails to emphasize, and herein lies the great weakness of his teaching. Not only does he, with the misguided zeal of an apologist, gloze deliberately over certain particular cruelties of the Creation and accept them as finite forms of good, but also he tends to explain away the very nature of evil in itself. He tends to be misled by his own true theories. For it is true that evil is ultimately non-existent. St. Augustine taught this when he said "Sin is nought",¹ so did Julian of Norwich, who "saw not *sin*," because she believes "it hath no manner of substance nor any part of being."² The fault of Dionysius is the natural failure of his mental type to grasp the mere facts of the actual world as mere facts. He is so dazzled with his vision of ultimate Reality that he does not feel with any intensity the partial realities of this finite universe. Hence, though his theory of evil is, in the

¹ *Com. on St. John* 1:13. Cf. *Conf.* vii:18, xii:11.

² *Revelations of Divine Love*, xxvii.

main, true, he does not quite grasp the true application of his theory to this world of actual facts.

For this world is by its very nature finite. And hence, if the evil in it is (as Dionysius rightly says) but partial, it must also be remembered (as he for a moment forgets) that its very existence is but partial. And, therefore, though evil is ultimately non-existent, yet the bad qualities of things may, so far as this present world is concerned, have as much reality, or at least as much actuality, as their good qualities. And when we say that evil is ultimately non-existent we merely mean that evil *ought* to have no actuality here, not that it *has* none. Dionysius calls evil a lapse and failure of the creature's proper virtues. But a lapse or failure has in it something positive, as he in the same breath both admits by using the word and also tries to explain away. It is as positive as the virtues from which it lapses. The absence of light from the centre of a wooden block is nothing, for the light has no proper place there, but the absence of light from the air, where light should be, is darkness and is a visible shadow. St. Augustine has crystallized this truth in his famous epigram, quoted above in part, which runs in full as follows: "Sin is naught, and men are naughtes when they sin." The void left by the want of a good thing has a content consisting in the want. Probably had Dionysius seen more of the world's misery and sin he would have had a stronger sense of this fact. And in that case he would have given more prominence than he gives, in his extant writings at least, to the Cross of Christ.

Two things should, however, be borne in mind. In the first place he is writing for intellectual Christians in whom he can take for granted both an understanding of metaphysics and a horror of sin. To such readers the non-existence of evil could not

have the same meaning as it would to the world outside. For the same reason he (like other Christian teachers after him) speaks of God's transcendent Non-Existence without fearing lest his words should be interpreted as atheism. In fact, to guard against misinterpretation he utters the express warning that mysteries can only be taught to the Initiated¹

In the second place throughout his whole treatment of evil, he is no doubt writing with an eye on the dualistic heresy of the Manichees, which was prevalent in his day. Hence the occasional indiscretion of the zeal with which he seeks to block every loop-hole looking towards dualism. The result is a one-sided emphasis in his teaching rather than positive error. He rightly denies a dualism of ultimate realities, but he tends to ignore, rather than to deny, the obvious dualism of actual facts.

Before proceeding to the Method of Contemplation which crowns and vitalizes the entire speculative system of Dionysius, it will be well to bring together in one paragraph the various meanings he gives to Non-Existence.

(1) The Super-Essence transcends the distinction between the Aristotelian "Matter" and "Form", but in this world the two are distinct from each other. And whereas, in this world, Form without "Matter" has an abstract existence for thought, "Matter" without Form has none. Thus mere "Matter" is non-existent. And hence things both before their creation and after their destruction are non-existent, for their "Matter" has then no "form". (2) Similarly Good without evil exists as the highest Manifestation or "Form" of the Godhead, but evil without Good is formless and therefore non-existent. (This does not mean that "Matter" or the world-stuff is evil, but that neither it nor evil is anything at all.) And since

¹ *Div Nom* 1. 8, *ad fin*, *Myst Theol* 1. 2

evil is ultimately altogether non-existent, all things are non-existent in so far as they are evil. (3) Finally, the Super-Essence is, in a transcendent manner, Non-Existent as being *beyond* Existence. And hence the paradox that the destructive force of evil and the higher impulse towards the Godhead both have the same negative principle of a discontent with the existent world—the dangerous, yet true, doctrine (taught, among others, by St Augustine¹ and Dante²) that evil is a mistaken quest for Good.

The principle of this classification is quite simple. It lies in the fact that *Being* is the most universal of the Emanations or Forms, and that all things therefore exist only in so far as they possess Form. Hence the want of all "form" is non-entity and makes things which are without any form to be non-existent, that want of proper "form" which we call evil is a tendency to non-entity and makes evil things to be so far non-existent, the want of complete substantial or spiritual "form" makes merely existent things (*i. e.* lifeless things) to be "un-existent", and the transcendence of all "Form" makes the Super-Essence to be in a special sense "Non-Existent."

The theory of evil, as given above, is worked out in a manner sufficiently startling

We naturally divide existent things into good and bad and do not think of non-existent things as being things at all. Dionysius, with apparent perversity, says all things are good, and then proceeds to divide them into "Existent" and "Non-Existent"! The reason is this. All things have two sides to their being—the one in the Super-Essence and the other in themselves. In the Super-Essence they are eternally good, even before their creation. But in themselves (*i. e.* in their created essence) they were wholly non-existent before their temporal creation, and after

¹ *Conf* ii 6, 12-14

Parad v 10-12

it are partially non-existent in so far as they are tainted with evil.

V — CONTEMPLATION

So far this doctrine of a dual state belonging to all things may seem an unprofitable speculation. We now come to the point where its true value will be seen. For it underlies a profound theory of Personality and a rich method of Contemplation. This part of the subject is difficult, and will need close attention.

The process of Creation advances from the simple to the complex as Life is added to mere Being, and Consciousness to Life, and Rationality to Consciousness. But from this point there begins a new phase in the process. Man, having as it were floated into the world down the Universal stream of Emanation, now enters into his spirit, and so plunges beneath the stream, and there below its surface finds an under-current which begins to sweep him in a contrary direction towards the Source. By the downward movement his personality has been produced, by this upward movement it will be transformed.

So man presses on towards God, and the method of his journey is a concentration of all his spiritual powers. By this method he gathers himself together away from outward things into the centre of his being. And thus he gradually becomes unified and simplified, like the Angels whose creation Dionysius was able to place at the very commencement of the developing temporal order precisely because their nature is of this utterly simple and concentrated kind. And, because the process of advance is one of spiritual concentration, and moves more and more from external things into the hidden depths of the soul, therefore man must cast away the separate forms of those elements which he thus draws from

the circumference into the centre of his personal spirit. Having sucked the nourishment from the various fruits growing severally in their different proper zones by the margin of the stream up which he presses, he assimilates those vitalizing elements into his own tissues (finding each food suited in turn to his advancing strength) and casts the rind away as a thing no longer needed. And this rejection of the husk in which the nourishing fruit had grown is the process described by Dionysius as the *Via Negativa*.

Let us consider this matter more in detail.

The first stage of Religion is anthropomorphic. God is conceived of as a magnified Man with an outward form. This notion contains some low degree of truth, but it must be spiritualized. And in casting away the materialistic details of the conception we begin to enter on a *Via Negativa*. All educated Christians enter on this path, though very few are given the task of pursuing it to the end. So first the notion of an outward material form is cast away and then the notion of change. God is now regarded as a changeless and immaterial Being, possessing all the qualities of Personality and all the capacities of Sensation and Perception in an eternal and spiritual manner. This is a conception of God built up, largely, by the Discursive Reason and appealing to that side of our nature. But the Intuitive Reason seeks to pierce beyond this shimmering cloud into the hidden Light which shines through it. For the mind demands an Absolute Unity beyond this variety of Attributes. And such a Unity, being an axiom or postulate, lies in a region behind the deductions of the Discursive Reason. For all deduction depends upon axioms, and axioms themselves cannot be deduced.

Thus the human spirit has travelled far, but still

it is unsatisfied. From the simple unity of its own being it gazes up at the Simple Unity of the Uncreated Light which still shines above it and beyond it. The Light is One Thing and the human spirit is another. All elements of difference in the human spirit and in the Uncreated Light have disappeared, but there still remains the primary distinction between Contemplating Subject and Contemplated Object. The human self and the Uncreated Light stand in the mutual relationships of "Me" and "Thee". That which says "Me" is not the Being Which is addressed as "Thee", and the Being addressed as "Thee" is not that which says "Me." The two stand over against one another.

This relationship must now be transcended by a process leading to ecstasy. The human spirit must seek to go forth out of itself (i.e. out of its created being) into the Uncreated Object of its contemplation and so to be utterly merged. So it ceases to desire even its own being in itself. Casting selfhood away, it strives to gain its true being and selfhood by losing them in the Super-Essence. Laying its intellectual activity to rest it obtains, by a higher spiritual activity, a momentary glimpse into the depths of the Super-Essence, and perceives that There the distinction between "Me" and "Thee" is not. It sees into the hidden recesses of an unplumbed Mystery in which its own individual being and all things are ultimately transcended, engulfed and transformed into one indivisible Light. It stands just within the borders of this Mystery and feels the process of transformation already beginning within itself. And, though the movements of the process are only just commenced, yet it feels by a hidden instinct the ultimate Goal whither they must lead. For, as Ruysbroeck says "To such men it is revealed that they *are* That which they contemplate."

This transcendent spiritual activity is called Unknowing. For when we know a thing we can trace out the lines of difference which separate it from other things, or which separate one part of it from another. All knowledge, in fact, consists in, or at least includes, the power of separating "This" from "That." But in the Super-Essence there are no lines of difference to trace, and there is no "This" or "That." Or rather, to put it differently, "This" and "That," being now transcended, are simply one and the same thing. While the human spirit is yet imperfect, it looks up and sees the Super-Essence far beyond it. At this stage it still feels itself as "this" and still perceives the Super-Essence as "That." But when it begins to enter on the stage of spiritual Reflection (to use the technical term borrowed by Dionysius from the Mysteries) it penetrates the Super-Essence and darkly perceives that There the distinction ultimately vanishes. It sees a point where "this" is transfigured into "That," and "That" is wholly "this." And, indeed, already "That" begins to pour Itsself totally into "this" through the act whereby "this" has plunged itself into "That."

Thus the ultimate goal of the "ego" now seen afar by Unknowing and attainable, perhaps, hereafter, is to be merged. And yet it will never be lost. Even the last dizzy leap into Absorption will be performed in a true sense by the soul itself and within the soul itself. The statement of Dionysius that in the Super-Essence all things are "fused and yet distinct," when combined with the doctrine of human immortality, means nothing else. For it means that the immortality of the human soul is of an individual kind; and so the self, in one sense, persists even while, in another sense, it is merged. This is the most astounding paradox of all! And Dionysius states the apparent contradiction without seeking to explain it simply

because, here as elsewhere, he is not much concerned with theory but is merely struggling to express in words an overwhelming spiritual experience. The explanation, however (if such it may be called) can easily be deduced from his theory of existence and of personality

All things have two sides to their existence · one in the Super-Essence, the other in themselves. Thus a human personality is (in William Law's words) an "outbirth" from the Godhead. And having at last made its journey Home, it must still possess these two sides to its existence. And hence, whereas on the one side it is merged, on the other it is not. Its very being consists of this almost incredible paradox. And personality is a paradox because the whole world is a paradox, and the whole world is fulfilled in personality.

For this principle of a twofold existence underlies all things, and is a reflection of the Super-Essential Nature. As the Super-Essence has an eternal tendency to pass out of Itself by emanation, so the creatures have a tendency to pass out of themselves by spiritual activity. As the Super-Essence creates the world and our human souls by a species of Divine "ecstasy," so the human soul must return by an answering "ecstasy" to the Super-Essence. On both sides there is the same principle of Self-Transcendence. The very nature of Reality is such that it must have its being outside itself.

And this principle of self-transcendence or ecstasy underlies not only the solitary quest of the individual soul for God, but also the mutual relations of the various individuals with each other. In all their social activities of loving fellowship the creatures seek and find themselves in one another and so outside of themselves. It is the very essence of Reality that it is not self-sufficing or self-contained.

Not only do the creatures in which the Super-Essence overflows possess, by an answering mystery, their true being in the Super-Essence, but, as a result of this, they possess their true being in each other; for in the Super-Essence each has its place as an element in One single and indivisible Reality. We have here, in fact, the great antinomy of the One and the Many, or the Universal and the Particulars, not solved indeed, but pronounced to be insoluble and therefore ultimate. It penetrates into a region beyond the intellect, and that is why the intellect is finally baffled by it.

The Dionysian theory that one side of our being is outside ourselves in the Super-Essence will be found incidentally to reconcile Pragmatism and Idealism together. For Dionysius teaches that on one side of our being we actually develop in Time. And, if this is so, we do as the Pragmatists assert literally *make* Reality. But the other side of our being is timeless and eternally perfect outside ourselves. And if this is so, then Reality, as Idealists tell us, is something utterly beyond all change. Perhaps this paradox is intended in Wordsworth's noble line —

So build we up the being that we *are* ¹

VI.—DIONYSIUS AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Let us now consider the bearings of the Dionysian theory on certain other currents of modern philosophy.

According to Dr. McTaggart each human soul possesses, behind its temporal nature, a timeless self and each one of these timeless selves is an eternal

¹ *Excursion*, iv, about 70 lines from the end. With "the being that we are," cf. *Prelude*, xiv 113-115 —

"The highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of whom they are"

differentiation of the Absolute.¹ Now if these timeless selves are finite, then none embraces the whole system. And, if that is so, in what does the Spiritual Unity of the whole consist? If, on the other hand, they are infinite, then each one must embrace the whole System, and, if so, how can they remain distinct? Having the same context, they must coalesce even as (according to Orthodox Theology) the "Persons" of the Trinity coalesce in the Unity behind the plane of Manifestation.² Dr McTaggart's philosophical scheme is noble, but it seems open to this metaphysical attack, and psychologically it appears to be defective as it leaves no room for worship, which is a prime need of the human soul. The Dionysian theory seems to meet the difficulty, for since our ultimate being is outside ourselves in the Super-Essence, one side of our Being is supra-personal. Our finite selves are, on that side, merged together in One Infinite "Self" (if It may be thus inadequately described), and this Infinite Self (so to call It) embraces, and is the Spiritual Unity of the whole System. And this Infinite Self, seen from afar, is and must be the Object of all worship until at last worship shall be swallowed up in the completeness of Unknowing.

The paradox that our true existence is (in a sense) outside ourselves is the paradox of all life. We live by breath and food, and so our life is in these things outside our individual bodies. Our life is in the air and in our nourishment before we assimilate it as our own. More astonishing still, Bergson has shown that our perceptions are outside us in the things we perceive.³ When I perceive an object a living current passes from the object through my eyes by the

¹ *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, especially in chaps. II. and III.

² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, Pars I Q. XL. Art. III.

³ *Matière et Mémoire*, chap. I.

afferent nerves to the brain, and thence by the efferent nerves once more to the object from which it started, causing a mere sensation in me (*i.e.* in my body) but causing me also by that sensation to have a perception outside me (*i.e.* outside my body) in the thing I look at. And all who gaze upon the same object have their perceptions outside themselves in that same object which yet is indivisibly one. Even so are we to find at last that we all have our true selfhoods in the One Super-Essence outside us, and yet each shall all the time have a feeling in himself of his own particular being without which the Super-Essence could not be his.

The doctrine of Unknowing must not be confounded with Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable. The actual terms may be similar the meanings are at opposite poles. For Herbert Spencer could conceive only of an intellectual apprehension, which being gone, nothing remained. Dionysius was familiar with a spiritual apprehension which soars beyond the intellect. Hence Herbert Spencer preaches ignorance concerning ultimate things, Dionysius (like Bergson in modern times)¹ a transcendence of knowledge. The one means a state below the understanding and the other a state above it. The one teaches that Ultimate Reality is, and must always be, beyond our reach, the other that the Ultimate Reality at last becomes so near as utterly to sweep away (in a sense) the distinction which separates us from It. That this is the meaning of Unknowing is plain from the whole trend of the Dionysian teaching, and is definitely stated, for instance, in the passage about the statue or in others which say that the Divine Darkness is dark through excess of light. It is even possible that the word "Unknowing" was (with this positive meaning) a

¹ See *Evolution Crêatrice*, towards the end.

technical term of the Mysteries or of later Greek Philosophy, and that this is the real explanation and interpretation of the inscription on the Athenian altar "To the Unknown God."¹

VII—THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTEMPLATION

Be this as it may, Dionysius is unquestionably speaking of a psychological state to which he himself has been occasionally led. It must, however, be carefully distinguished from another psychological state, apparently the same and yet really quite different, of which there is also evidence in other writers.

Amiel speaks of a mental condition in which the self lies dormant, dissolved, as it were, and absorbed into an undifferentiated state of being, and it is well known that a man's individuality may become merged in the impersonal existence of a crowd. The contrast between such a state and Unknowing consists wholly in the difference of spiritual values and spiritual intensity. Amiel felt the psychic experience mentioned above to be enervating. And the danger is fairly obvious. For this psychic state comes not through spiritual effort but through spiritual indolence. And the repose of spiritual attainment must be a strenuous repose.

The same psychic material may take either of two opposite forms, for the highest experiences and the lowest are both made of the same spiritual stuff. That is why great sinners make great saints and why our Lord preferred disreputable people to the respectable righteous. A storm of passion may produce a *Sonata* of Beethoven or it may produce an act of murder. All depends on the quality and direction of the storm. So in the present instance. There is a higher merging of the self and a lower

¹ Acts xvii. 23 Cf Norden's *Agnostos Theos*

merging of it. The one is above the level of personality, the other beneath it, the one is religious the other hedonistic, the one results from spiritual concentration and the other from spiritual dissipation.

Apparently our souls are crystallizations, as it were, out of an undifferentiated psychic ocean. So our personalities are formed, which we must keep inviolate. To melt back, though but for a time, into that ocean would be to surrender our heritage and to incur great loss. This is the objection to mere psychic trances. But some have been called on to advance by the intensification of their spiritual powers until they have for a moment reached a very different Ocean, which, with its fervent heat, has burst the hard outer case of their finite selfhood, and so they have been merged in that Vast Sea of Uncreated Light which has brought them no loss but only gain.

Just as in early days some had special gifts of prophecy through the power of the Holy Ghost, but some through the power of Satan, and the test lay in the manifested results,¹ so in the present instance. We cannot doubt that the experience is true and valid when we see its glory shining forth in the humble Saints of God.

To illustrate this experience fully from the writings of the Saints would need a volume to itself. Let us take a very few examples from one or two writers of unquestioned orthodoxy.

And first, for the theory of personality implied in it we may turn to Pascal, whose teaching amounts to very much the same thing as that of Dionysius. "*Le moi*," he says, "*est haïssable . . . En un mot, le Moi a deux qualités il est injuste en soi, en ce qu'il se fait centre du tout, il est incommode aux autres, en ce qu'il les veut asservir . car chaque Moi est l'ennemi*

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 1-3, 1 John iv. 1-3

et voudrait être le tyran de tous les autres."¹ Thus a self-centred *Moi*, or Personality, is wrong inherently and not only in its results. And it is inherently wrong because a personality has no right to be the centre of things. From this we may conclude (1) that God, as being the rightful Centre of all things, is not a *Moi*, or Personality, and (2) that the transcendence of our *Moi*, or Personality, is our highest duty. What, then, is the goal to which this transcendence will lead us? Pascal has a clear-cut answer. "*Il n'y a que l'Être universel qui soit tel . . . Le Bien Universel est en nous, est nous mêmes et n'est pas nous*"² This is exactly the Dionysian doctrine. Each must enter into himself and so must find Something that is his true Self and yet is not his particular self. His true being is deep within his soul and yet in Something Other than his individuality which is within his soul and yet outside of him. We may compare St. Augustine's words. "I entered into the recesses of my being . . . and saw . . . above my mind an Unchanging Light"³ Where, then, did I find Thee except in Thyself above myself?"⁴

Now for the actual experience of Unknowing and of the Negative Path that leads to it. The finest description of this, or at least of the aspiration after it, is to be found in the following passage from the *Confessions of St Augustine* ⁵

"Could one silence the clamorous appetites of the body, silence his perceptions of the earth, the water, and the air, could he silence the sky, and could his very soul be silent unto itself and, by ceasing to think of itself, transcend self-consciousness, could he silence all dreams and all revelations which the mind can image, yea, could he entirely silence all language and all symbols and every transitory thing—

¹ *Pensées*, VI. 20 (ed. Havet)

² *Conf.* VII. 16

⁴ *Ib.* X. 37.

³ *Ib.* 26, XXIV. 39

⁵ *Ib.* IX. 25

—inasmuch as these all say to the hearer : ‘We made not ourselves but were made by the Eternal’—if, after such words, they were forthwith to hold their peace, having drawn the mind’s ear towards their Maker, and He were now to speak alone, not through them but by Himself, so that we might hear His word, not through human language, nor through the voice of an angel, nor through any utterance out of a cloud, nor through any misleading appearance, but might instead hear, without these things, the very Being Himself, Whose presence in them we love—might hear Him with our Spirit even as now we strain our intellect and reach, with the swift movement of thought, to an eternal Wisdom that remains unmoved beyond all things—if this movement were continued, and all other visions (being utterly unequal to the task) were to be done away, and this one vision were to seize the beholder, and were to swallow him up and plunge him in the abyss of its inward delights, so that his life for ever should be like that fleeting moment of consciousness for which we have been yearning, would not such a condition as this be an ‘ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD’?”

This passage describes the *Via Negativa* in terms of aspiration drawn (we cannot doubt) from experience. The soul must cast all things away—sense, perception, thought, and the very consciousness of self, and yet the process and its final result are of the most intense and positive kind. We are reminded of Wordsworth’s—

“Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired.”¹

Perhaps more striking is the testimony of St Thomas à Kempis, since, having no taste for speculation, he is not likely to be misled by theories. In

¹ *Excursion*, Book I.

the *Imitation of Christ*¹ occurs the following passage :
“ When shall I at full gather myself in Thee, that for
Thy love I feel not myself, but Thee only, above all
feeling and all manner, in a *manner not known to
all?* ”

Thus he speaks longingly of a state in which the individual human spirit is altogether merged and has no self-consciousness whatever, except the mere consciousness of its merging. It is conscious of God alone because, as an object of thought, it has gone out of its particular being and is merged and lost in Him. And the way in which St Thomas describes this state and speaks of it as not known to all suggests that it was known to himself by personal experience.

The clearest and profoundest analysis of the state, based also on the most vivid personal experience of it, is given by Ruysbroeck. The two following passages are examples.

“ The spirit for ever continues to burn in itself, for its love is eternal ; and it feels itself ever more and more to be burnt up in love, for it is drawn and transformed into the Unity of God, where the spirit burns in love. If it observes itself, it finds a distinction and an otherness between itself and God, but where it is burnt up it is undifferentiated and without distinction, and therefore it feels nothing but unity, for the flame of the Love of God consumes and devours all that it can enfold in its Self ”²

“ And, after this, there follows the third way of feeling, namely, that we feel ourselves to be one *with* God, for, through the transformation in God, we feel ourselves to be swallowed up in the fathomless abyss of our eternal blessedness, wherein we can nevermore find any distinction between ourselves and God. And this is our highest feeling, which we cannot

¹ Book III, chap. xxiii.

² *The Sparkling Stone*, chap. iii.

experience in any other way than in the immersion in love. And therefore, so soon as we are uplifted and drawn into our highest feeling, all our powers stand idle in an essential fruition, but our powers do not pass away into nothingness, for then we should lose our created being. And as long as we stand idle, with an inclined spirit and with open eyes, but without reflection, so long we can contemplate and have fruition. But, at the very moment in which we seek to prove and to comprehend what it is that we feel, we fall back into reason, and there we find a distinction and an otherness between ourselves and God, and find God outside ourselves in incomprehensibility"¹

Nothing could be more lucid. The *moi* is merged in the Godhead and yet the *ego* still retains its individuality un-merged, and the existence of the perfected spirit embraces these two opposite poles of fusion and distinction.

The same doctrine is taught, though with less masterly clearness, by St. Bernard in the *De Diligendo Deo*. There is, he says, a point of rapture where the human spirit "forgets itself . . . and passes wholly into God." Such a process is "to lose yourself, as it were, like one who has no existence, and to have no self-consciousness whatever, and to be emptied of yourself and almost annihilated." "As a little drop of water," he continues, "blended with a large quantity of wine, seems utterly to pass away from itself and assumes the flavour and colour of wine, and as iron when glowing with fire loses its original or proper form and becomes just like the fire, and as the air, drenched in the light of the sun, is so changed into the same shining brightness that it seems to be not so much the recipient of the brightness as the actual brightness itself so all human sensibility in

¹ *The Sparkling Stone*, chap. x

the saints must then, in some ineffable manner, melt and pass out of itself, and be lent into the will of God . The substance (*i. e.* personality) will remain but in another form "¹

Of this transcendent experience St Bernard bluntly says . "To experience this state is to be deified," and "Deification" is a technical term in the Mystical Theology of both the Eastern and the Western Church . Though the word *θέωσις* was perhaps a Mystery term, yet it occurs, for instance, in the writings of St Macarius, and there is therefore nothing strange or novel in the fact that Dionysius uses it . But he carefully distinguishes between this and cognate words, and his fantastic and uncouth diction is (here as so often) due to a straining after rigid accuracy . The Super-Essence he calls the Originating Godhead, or rather, perhaps, the Origin of Godhead (*Θεαρχία*), just as he calls it also "the Origin of Existence" (*οὐσιαρχία*) . From this Origin there issues eternally, in the Universal stream of Emanation, that which he calls Deity or Very Deity (*θεότης* or *αὐτοθεότης*) . This Deity, like Being, Life, etc., is an effluence radiating from the Super-Essential Godhead, and is a distant View of It as the dim visibility of a landscape is the landscape seen from afar, or as the effluent heat belongs to a fire . Purified souls, being raised up to the heights of contemplation, participate in this Effluence and so are deified (*θεοῦνται*) and become in a derivative sense, divine (*θεωδεῖς, θεῖοι*), or may even be called Gods (*θεοί*), just as by participating in the Effluence or Emanation of Being all created things become in a derivative sense existent (*οὐσιωδῆ, ὄντα*) . The Super-Essential Godhead (*Θεαρχία*) is beyond Deity as It is beyond Existence, but the names "Deity" (*Θεότης*) or "Existent" (*ὄν*) may be symbolically or

¹ *De Div Deo*, chap x.

inadequately applied to It, as a fire may be termed "warm" from its results though its actual temperature is of an intenser kind than this would imply. And the name of "Godhead," which belongs to It more properly, is given It (says Dionysius) merely because it is the Source of our deification. Thus instead of arguing from God's Divinity to man's potential divinity, Dionysius argues from the acquisition of actual divinity by certain men to God's Supra-Divinity. This is only another way of saying that God is but the highest Appearance or Manifestation of the Absolute. And this (as was seen above) is only another way of stating the orthodox and obvious doctrine that all our notions of Ultimate Reality are inadequate.

VIII.—THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS OF DIONYSIUS'S DOCTRINES

In the treatise "Concerning the Divine Names," Dionysius seeks to reconcile his daring conceptions with Scripture. Nor can he be said to fail. His argument, briefly, is that in Scripture we have a Revealed Religion and that things which are Revealed belong necessarily to the plane of Manifestation. Thus Revealed Religion interprets to us in terms of human thought things which, being Incomprehensible, are ultimately beyond thought. This is merely what St Augustine teaches when he says¹ that the Prologue of St. John's Gospel reveals the mysteries of

¹ *Com. on St John*, Tr I 1 "For who can declare the Truth as it actually is? I venture to say, my brothers, perhaps John himself has not declared it as it actually is, but, even he, only according to his powers. For he was a man speaking about God—one inspired, indeed, by God but still a man. Because he was inspired he has declared something of the Truth—had he not been inspired he could not have declared anything of it—but because he was a man (though an inspired one) he has not declared the whole Truth, but only what was possible for a man."

Eternity not as they actually are but as human thought can grasp them¹ The neo-Platonism of Dionysius does not invalidate Scripture any more than that of Plotinus invalidates the writings of Plato Dionysius merely says that there is an unplumbed Mystery behind the words of Scripture and streaming through them, just as Plotinus and other neo-Platonists hold that there is an unplumbed Mystery streaming through from behind Plato's categories of thought. And if it be urged that at least our Lord's teaching on the Fatherhood of God cannot be reconciled with the doctrine of a Supra-Personal Godhead, the answer is near at hand.² For the Pagan Plotinus, whose doctrine is similar to that of Dionysius, gives this very name of "Father" to his Supra-Personal Absolute—or rather to that Aspect of It which comes into touch with the human soul³ Moreover in the most rigidly orthodox Christian theology God the

¹ [What Augustine says is that St John, because he was only human, has not declared the whole Truth concerning Deity But this is very different from saying that what St John has declared does not correspond with the eternal Reality While Augustine holds that the Johannine Revelation is not complete, he certainly held that it was correct as far as it goes Augustine had no conception of a Deity whom the qualities of self-consciousness and personality did not essentially represent It is more than questionable whether Augustine would have accepted the statement that the Prologue of St. John's Gospel does not record the mysteries of Eternity "*as they actually are*" Augustine had a profound belief that God as He is in Himself corresponds with God as He is revealed.—ED]

² [The writer argues that Christ and Plotinus both employ the same expression, Father, to the Deity But the use of the same expression will not prove much unless it is employed in the same meaning No one can seriously contend that the Pagan Plotinus meant what Jesus Christ meant of the Fatherhood of God Surely it is unquestionable that the Fatherhood of God meant for Jesus Christ what constituted God's supreme reality It was employed in a sense which is entirely foreign to the metaphysical doctrine of a Supra-Personal Deity The Semitic conception of the Godhead was not that of a neo-Platonist metaphysician —ED]

³ e.g. *Enn.* I 6, 8. "We have a country whence we came, and we have a Father there"

Father is not a Personality St. Augustine, for instance,¹ teaches that the "Persons" of the Trinity are Elements whose true nature is unknown to us² They correspond however, he says, to certain elements in our individual personalities, and hence the human

¹ [What Augustine says is that we do not speak of three essences and three Gods, but of one essence and one God. Why then do we speak of three Persons and not of one Person?

"Why, therefore, do we not call these three together one Person, or one Essence and one God, we say three Persons, while we do not say three Gods or three Essences, unless it be because we wish some one word to serve for that meaning whereby the Trinity is understood, that we might not be altogether silent when asked, what three, while we confessed that they are three?"

² Augustine's distinction is between the genus and the species Thus Abraham Isaac and Jacob are three specimens of one genus. What he contends is that this is not the case in the Deity 2. The essence of the Deity is unfolded in these Three And "there is nothing else of that Essence beside the Trinity" "In no way can any other person whatever exist out of the same essence" whereas in mankind there can be more than three 3 Moreover the three specimens of the genus man, Abraham Isaac and Jacob, are more, collectively, than any one of them by himself "But in God it is not so, for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together is not a greater essence than the Father alone or the Son alone" What he means is that the Trinity is not to be explained by spacial metaphors (*De Trin* vii 11)

Augustine then is not teaching that the Persons of the Trinity are Elements whose true nature is unknown to us He certainly does teach that Personality in the Godhead must exist otherwise than what we find under human limitations. But Augustine's conception of Deity is not the Supra Personal Absolute To him the Trinity was not confined to the plane of Manifestation We have only to remember how he regards Sabellianism to prove this Moreover, who can doubt that Augustine's psychological conception of God as the Lover, the Beloved and the Love which in itself is personal, represented to his mind the innermost reality and ultimate essence of the Deity? God is not for Augustine a supra-personal something in which both unity and trinity are transcended. The Trinity of Manifestation is for Augustine that which corresponds with and is identical with the very essential being of Deity God is not merely Three as known to us but Three as He is in Himself apart from all self revelation —ED]

³ *De Trin* vii. 11 "Why do we speak of Three 'Persons' except because we need some one term to explain the meaning of the word 'Trinity,' so as not to be entirely without an answer to the question 'Three What?' when we confess God to be Three."

soul is created (he tells us) not in the image of one Person in the Godhead but in the image of the whole Trinity¹ Thus he by implication denies that God the Father is, in the ordinary sense of the word, a Personality And the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas is very similar² It may, perhaps, even be said that the germ of the most startling doctrines which Dionysius expounds may be actually found in Scripture A state, for instance, which is not knowledge and yet is not ignorance, is described by St. Paul when he says that Christians "know God or rather are known of Him"³ This is the mental attitude of Unknowing For the mind is quiescent and emptied of its own powers and so receives a knowledge the scope and activity of which is outside itself in God And in speaking of an ecstatic experience which he himself had once attained St. Paul seems to suggest that he was, on that occasion, outside of himself in such a manner as hardly, in the ordinary sense, to retain his own identity⁴ Moreover he suggests that the redeemed and perfected creation is at last to be actually merged in God (*ἵνα ἡ ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν παῖσιν*⁵) And the doctrine of Deification is certainly, in the germ, Scriptural For as Christ is the Son of God so are we to be Sons of God,⁶ and Christ is reported actually to have based His own claims to Deity on the potential Divinity of the human soul.⁷ Moreover we are to reign with Him⁸ and are, in a manner passing our present apprehension, to be made like Him when we see Him as He is⁹

Now all the boldest statements of Dionysius about

¹ *De Trin* vii. 12

² Gal iv 9

³ 1 Cor xv 28

⁷ John x 34-36

⁹ 1 John iii. 2

² *Summa*, Pars I Q XLV Art. vii.

⁴ 2 Cor xii 2-5

⁶ New Testament, *passim*.

⁸ 2 Tim ii. 12, Rev i 6, v 10, xx. 6.

the ultimate glory for which the human soul is destined are obviously true of Christ, and as applied to Him, they would be a mere commentary on the words "I and the Father are One."¹ Therefore if Christ came to impart His Life to us so that the things which are His by Nature should be ours by Grace, it follows that the teaching of Dionysius is in harmony with Scripture so long as it is made to rest on the Person and Work of Christ. And, though Dionysius does not emphasize the Cross as much as could be wished, yet he certainly holds that Christ is the Channel through which the power of attainment is communicated to us. It must not be forgotten that he is writing as a Christian to Christians, and so assumes the Work of Christ as a revealed and experienced Fact. And since he holds that every individual person and thing has its pre-existent limits ordained in the Super-Essence, therefore he holds that the Human Soul of Christ has Its pre-existent place there as the Head of the whole creation. That is what he means by the phrase "Super-Essential Jesus," and that is what is taught in the quotation from Hierotheus already alluded to. No doubt the lost works of Dionysius dealt more fully with this subject, as indeed he hints himself. And if, through this scanty sense of the incredible evil which darkens and pollutes the world, he does not in the present treatise lay much emphasis upon the Saviour's Cross, yet he gives us definite teaching on the kindred Mystery of the Incarnation.

IX.—CONCLUSION

A few words on this matter and the present sketch is almost done. The Trinity (as was said) is Super-

¹ John x. 30

Essential or Supra-Personal. It is that Side of the Godhead which is turned towards the plane of Creation. Each "Person" possesses the whole Super-Essence and yet Each in a different manner. For the Father is originative and the other Two "Persons" derivative. The entire Super-Essence timelessly wells up in the Father and so passes on (as it were), timeless and entire, to the Son and Spirit. Thus the Second "Person" of the Trinity possesses eternally (like the other Two "Persons" in the Godhead) nothing but this Formless Radiance. But when the Second "Person" becomes Incarnate this Formless and Simple Radiance focuses Itself (shall we say?) in the complex lens of a Human Individuality. Or perhaps Christ's Humanity should rather be compared to a prism which breaks that single white radiance into the iridescent colours of manifold human virtues. Thence there streams forth a glory which seeks to kindle in our hearts an answering fire whereby being wholly consumed we may pass up out of our finite being to find within the Super-Essence our pre-determined Home.

Such is, in outline, the teaching of this difficult writer who, though he tortured language to express the truth which struggled within him for utterance, yet has often been rashly condemned through being misunderstood. The charge of Pantheism that has been laid at his door is refuted by the very extravagance of the terms in which he asserts the Transcendence of the Godhead. For the title "Super-Essence" itself implies a Mystery which is indeed the ultimate Goal of the creatures but is not at present their actual plane of being. It implies a Height which, though it be their own, they yet can reach through nothing else than a complete self-renunciation. With greater show of reason Dionysius has been accused of hostility to civilization and external things. Yet here

again unjustly For, if in his solitary hermitage he lived far from the haunts of men, yet he wrote an entire treatise on the institutional side of Religion ; and he describes with impassioned enthusiasm the visible beauties of Nature And, in fact, in his treatment of evil, he goes out of his way to assert that the whole material world is good Outward things are assumed as the starting-point from which the human spirit must rise to another region of experience. Dionysius does not mean that they are all worthless, he simply means that they are not ultimate. In the passage concerning the three movements of the soul he implies that the human faculties are valuable though they must finally be transcended Even so Macarius tells us that "Revelation" is a mental state beyond "Perception" and beyond "Enlightened Vision."¹ All our natural activities must first sift together the particles which form the block of marble before we can by the *Via Negativa* carve the image out of it. And if this process of rejection destroys the block's original shape, yet it needs the block to work upon, and it does not seek to grind the whole material into powder All life, when rightly understood, is a kind of *Via Negativa*, and we must struggle after certain things and then deliberately cast them aside, as a musician must first master the laws of Counterpoint and then sometimes ignore them, or as the Religion of the Law is a preparation for the higher Religion of the Spirit Dionysius, nurtured in philosophy, passed beyond Philosophy without obscurantism, as St. Paul, nurtured in the Law, passed beyond the Law without disobedience Finite things are good, for they point us on to the Infinite, but if we chain ourselves to them they will become a hindrance to our journey, when they can no longer be a guide. And Dionysius

¹ *Hom*, vii. 5

would have us not destroy them but merely break our chains

His doctrines are certainly dangerous. Perhaps that is a mark of their truth. For the Ultimate Truth of things is so self-contradictory that it is bound to be full of peril to minds like ours which can only apprehend one side of Reality at the time. Therefore it is not perhaps to be altogether desired that such doctrines should be very popular. They can only be spiritually discerned, through the intensest spiritual effort. Without this they will only too readily lead to blasphemous arrogance and selfish sloth. And yet the *Via Negativa*, for those who can scale its dizzy ascent, is after all but a higher altitude of that same royal road which, where it traverses more populous regions, we all recognize as the one true Pilgrim's Way. For it seeks to attain its goal through self-renunciation. And where else are the true principles of such a process to be found if it be not in the familiar virtues of Christian humility and Christian love?

X.—BIBLIOGRAPHY

[The writings of the Areopagite consist of four important treatises *De divinis Nominibus*, *De mystica Theologia*, *De Cœlesti Hierarchia*, *De ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, some letters, and a number of lost documents referred to in the treatises. Little has been done as yet towards the provision of a critical text. The Syriac, Armenian and Arabic versions have not been investigated. Migne's text contains many manifest errors, it is a reprint of the Venice edition of 1755-6.

The ideas of Dionysius's system are discussed in all books on Mysticism, and a multitude of magazine articles, mainly in German, deal with isolated points

in the actual treatises besides the problem of authorship. The brief list given below will suffice for the present purpose.

The Dionysian Documents have been critically investigated by Hipler. His work was followed by J. Draseke in an Essay entitled "Dionysiaca," in the *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1887, pp 300-333. Also by Nirschl and by Styglmayr in the *Historische Jahrbuch*, 1895. Criticism on the authorship has been continued by Hugo Koch, "Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita," in the *Forschungen zur Christlichen Litteratur-und Dogmengeschichte*, 1900. Ed by Ehrhard and Kirsch. Hugo Koch's work is one of the best on the subject.

Colet, J (Dean), *Two Treatises on The Hierarchies of Dionysius*, with introduction and translation, by J. H. Lupton (London, 1869).

Fowler, J, *The Works of Dionysius, especially in Reference to Christian Art* (London, 1872). J Parker, English Translation (Oxford, 1897)

Sharpe, A B, *Mysticism Its True Nature and Value* (London, 1910). Contains a translation of the Mystical Theology and of the letters to Caius and Dorotheus

Inge, W. R., *Christian Mysticism* (London, 1899), pp 104-122.

Jones, Rufus M, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London, 1909), Chap. IV.

Gardner, Edmund G, *Dante and the Mystics* (London, 1913), Chap. III

For the general influence of Dionysius reference should be made to the following writers—

Bach, Josef, *Die Dogmengeschichte des Mittelalters*, 1 Theil, 1874, pp 6-15

Baur, F. C., *Die Christliche Lehre von der Dreier-*

nigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes, 1842, Bd II., 207-251

Dorner, *Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, English translation, Div. ii., Vol. I., pp. 157 ff

Westcott, Essay on Dionysius the Areopagite in *Religious Thought in the West*, 1891, pp. 142-193

Uebinger, J., *Die Gotteslehre des Nikolaus Cusanus*, 1888.—ED]

THE DIVINE NAMES

THIS Treatise contains thirteen chapters The following is a brief summary of their contents.

Chapter I Introductory The Purpose of the Treatise. Doctrine concerning God to be obtained from the Scriptures But all the Names there given Him cannot represent Him who is Nameless It is only Symbolical Theology.

Chapter II On the Divine Unity and Distinction.

Chapter III On the Approach to the Divine.

Chapter IV On Goodness as a Name of Deity, including a discussion on the Nature of Evil.

Chapter V On Deity as Being The three degrees Existence, Life, Intelligence

Chapter VI On Deity as Life.

Chapter VII. Deity considered as Wisdom, Reason, Truth

Chapter VIII Deity considered as Power

Chapter IX. Deity considered as Great and as Small Might be called, as Deity in relation to Space.

Chapter X Deity as Omnipotent the Ancient of Days. God in relation to Time.

Chapter XI On God and Peace.

Chapter XII On the Names Holy of holies, King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods

Chapter XIII. On the Divine Perfection and Unity.

CHAPTER I

*Dionysius the Presbyter, to his fellow-Presbyter Timothy.¹
What is the purpose of the discourse, and what the
tradition concerning the Divine Names*

1. NOW, Blessed Timothy, the *Outlines of Divinity*² being ended, I will proceed, so far as in me lies, to an Exposition of the Divine Names And here also let us set before our minds the scriptural rule that in speaking about God we should declare the Truth, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the power which the Spirit³ stirred up in the Sacred Writers, whereby, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge,⁴ we embrace those truths which, in like manner, surpass them, in that Union which exceeds our faculty, and exercise of discursive, and of intuitive reason⁵ We must not then dare to speak, or indeed to form any conception, of the hidden super-essential⁶ Godhead, except those things that are revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures⁷

¹ The name of St. Paul's companion is intended to give colour to the writer's pseudonym See Introduction, p 1, cf iii. 2

² This work is lost ³ 2 Cor ii. 4.

⁴ τοῖς ἀφθέγκτοις καὶ ἀγνώστοις ἀφθέγκτως καὶ ἀγνώστως συναπτόμεθα. See Intr on "Unknowing," p 32.

⁵ κατὰ τὴν κρείττονα τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς λογικῆς καὶ νοερᾶς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐνεργείας D frequently distinguishes between the discursive and the intuitive reason Together they cover the whole of the intellect, cf Wordsworth, *Prelude*, xiv 119, 120.

"Hence endless occupation for the soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive"

The former gives us deductions, the latter the axioms on which these are based. See Intr, p 26

⁶ See Intr, p. 4.

⁷ D is here contrasting the Affirmative Path of Knowing with the Negative Path of Unknowing The former has a value as leading up to the latter, but it is only safe so far as we keep within the bounds of Scripture Unscriptural conceptions of God are false Scriptural conceptions are true so far as they go, but their literal meaning must be transcended See Intr, p 41 f

For a super-essential understanding of It is proper to Unknowing, which lieth in the Super-Essence Thereof surpassing Discourse, Intuition and Being, acknowledging which truth let us lift up our eyes towards the steep height, so far as the effluent light of the Divine Scriptures grants its aid, and, as we strive to ascend unto those Supernal Rays, let us gird ourselves for the task with holiness and the reverent fear of God. For, if we may safely trust the wise and infallible Scriptures, Divine things are revealed unto each created spirit in proportion to its powers, and in this measure is perception granted through the workings of the Divine goodness, the which in just care for our preservation divinely tempereth unto finite measure the infinitude of things which pass man's understanding. For even as things which are intellectually discerned¹ cannot be comprehended or perceived by means of those things which belong to the senses, nor simple and imageless things by means of types and images, nor the formless and intangible essence of unembodied things by means of those which have bodily form,² by the same law of truth the boundless³ Super-Essence surpasses Essences, the Super-Intellectual Unity surpasses Intelligences,

¹ *ε* The Transcendent Truths which are beyond ordinary knowledge.

νοητά. The word *νοῦς* = Mind in the sense not merely of abstract intellect but of the spiritual personality. Hence the word is often used to = an angel, and *νοητός* is often used as = spiritual, instead of *πνευματικός*, which D does not employ. This use of *νοῦς* and its derivatives is ultimately due to the influence of Aristotle (Cf the use of *νοῦς* in Plotinus). St. Thomas Aquinas regards *intellectus* as = "personality." But here the reference is perhaps rather to the province of abstract intellect.

² Apparently this is the same thought repeated in three different ways. The formless essence (*ἀμορφία*) of a thing is simple and imageless—a Platonic *idea*—perceived by the mind, things which have bodily form are, as it were, types and symbols perceived by the senses.

³ Or "indeterminate."

the One which is beyond thought surpasses the apprehension of thought, and the Good which is beyond utterance surpasses the reach of words¹ Yea, it is an Unity which is the unifying Source of all unity and a Super-Essential Essence,² a Mind beyond the reach of mind³ and a Word beyond utterance, eluding Discourse, Intuition, Name, and every kind of being It is the Universal Cause of existence while Itself existing not, for It is beyond all Being and such that It alone could give, with proper understanding thereof, a revelation of Itself

2 Now concerning this hidden Super-Essential Godhead we must not dare, as I have said, to speak, or even to form any conception Thereof, except those things which are divinely revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures For as It hath lovingly taught us in the Scriptures concerning Itself⁴ the understanding and contemplation of Its actual nature is not accessible to any being, for such knowledge is super-essentially exalted above them all And many of the Sacred Writers thou wilt find who have declared that It is not only invisible and incomprehensible, but also unsearchable and past finding out, since there is no trace of any that have penetrated the hidden depths of Its infinitude.⁵ Not that the Good is wholly incommunicable to anything, nay, rather, while dwelling alone by Itself, and having there

¹ Thus the three grades are (1) the material world, (2) the spiritual world of truths, personality, etc., (3) the Godhead which is, so to speak, supra-spiritual

² *ε* A Supra Personal Personality See Intr, p 4 f

³ *νοῦς ἀνοητός* Probably not "Irrational Mind" (as Dr Inge translates it) Maximus takes it passively, as translated above

⁴ Ps. cxlv 3, Matt. xi 27, Rom xi 33, 1 Cor. ii. 11, Eph. iii. 8

⁵ *ὥς οὐκ ὄντος ἰχνους οὐδενὸς τῶν ἐπὶ τὴν κρυφίαν αὐτῆς ἀπειρίαν διεληλυθότων* Two interpretations of this passage are possible (1) Those who have penetrated the hidden Depths cannot describe the Vision (cf Dante, Par. xxxiii, 55-66), (2) Nobody has ever penetrated into the ultimate Depths of Deity

to them that are being brought unto unity. Yea, in a super-essential manner, above the category of origin, It is the Origin of all origin, and the good and bounteous Communication (so far as such may be¹) of hidden mysteries, and, in a word, It is the life of all things that live and the Being of all that are, the Origin and Cause of all life and being through Its bounty which both brings them into existence and maintains them

4. These mysteries we learn from the Divine Scriptures, and thou wilt find that in well-nigh all the utterances of the Sacred Writers the Divine Names refer in a Symbolical Revelation² to Its beneficent Emanations³. Wherefore, in almost all consideration of Divine things we see the Supreme Godhead celebrated with holy praises as One and an Unity, through the simplicity and unity of Its supernatural indivisibility, from whence (as from an unifying power) we attain to unity, and through the supernal conjunction of our diverse and separate qualities are knit together each into a Godlike Oneness, and all together into a mutual Godly union.⁴ And It is called the Trinity because Its supernatural fecundity is revealed in a Threefold Personality,⁵ wherefrom all Fatherhood in heaven and on earth exists and draws Its name. And It is called the Universal Cause⁶ since all things came into being through Its

¹ *ε* So far as we are capable of receiving this communication.

² *ἐκφαντορικῶς καὶ ὑμνητικῶς*

³ *ε* God's differentiated activities. Since the ultimate Godhead is ineffable, Scripture can only hint at Its Nature by speaking of Its manifestations in the relative sphere. See Intr, p. 8.

⁴ God is ineffable and transcends unity, see Intr, p. 5. But, since His presence in man produces an unity in each individual (and in human society), Scripture calls Him "One."

⁵ The ineffable Godhead transcends our conception of the Trinity. But we call Him a Trinity because we experience His trinal working—as our ultimate Home, as an Individual Personality Who was once Incarnate, and as a Power within our hearts. See Intr, p. 7.

⁶ God is not a First Cause, for a cause is one event in a temporal

bounty, whence all being springs, and It is called Wise and Fair because all things which keep their own nature uncorrupted are full of all Divine harmony and holy Beauty,¹ and especially It is called Benevolent² because, in one of Its Persons, It verily and wholly shared in our human lot, calling unto Itself and uplifting the low estate of man, wherefrom, in an ineffable manner, the simple Being of Jesus assumed a compound state,³ and the Eternal hath taken a temporal existence, and He who supernaturally transcends all the order of all the natural world was born in our Human Nature without any change or confusion of His ultimate properties. And in all the other Divine enlightenments which the occult Tradition of our inspired teachers hath, by mystic Interpretation, accordant with the Scriptures, bestowed upon us, we also have been initiated apprehending these things in the present life (according to our powers), through the sacred veils of that loving kindness which in the Scriptures and the Hierarchical Traditions,⁴ enwrappeth spiritual truths in terms drawn from the world of sense, and super-essential truths in terms drawn from Being, clothing with shapes and forms things which are shapeless and formless, and by a variety of separable symbols,

series, and God is beyond Time and beyond the whole creation. Yet in so far as He acts on the relative plane He may, by virtue of this manifestation of Himself in the creation, be spoken of as a Cause

¹ Beauty is a sacrament and only truly itself when it points to something beyond itself. That is why "Art for Art's sake" degrades art. Beauty reveals God, but God is more than Beauty. Hence Beauty has its true being *outside* itself in Him. Cf. Intr., p. 31

² Love is the most perfect manifestation of God. Yet God is in a sense beyond even love as we know it. For love, as we know it, implies the distinction between "me" and "thee," and God is ultimately beyond such distinction. See Intr., p. 35

³ ὁ ἀπλούς Ἰησοῦς συνετέθη Cf. *Myst Theol* III., "Super-Essential Jesus."

⁴ ἱεραρχικῶν παραδόσεων, i. e. Ecclesiastical Tradition.

fashioning manifold attributes of the imageless and supernatural Simplicity. But hereafter, when we are corruptible and immortal and attain the blessed lot of being like unto Christ, then (as the Scripture saith), we shall be for ever with the Lord,¹ fulfilled with His visible Theophany in holy contemplations, the which shall shine about us with radiant beams of glory (even as once of old it shone around the Disciples at the Divine Transfiguration), and so shall we, with our mind made passionless and spiritual, participate in a spiritual illumination from Him, and in an union transcending our mental faculties, and there, amidst the blinding blissful impulsions of His dazzling rays, we shall, in a diviner manner than at present, be like unto the heavenly Intelligences². For, as the infallible Scripture saith, we shall be equal to the angels and shall be the Sons of God, being Sons of the Resurrection³. But at present we employ (so far as in us lies), appropriate symbols for things Divine, and then from these we press on upwards according to our powers to behold in simple unity the Truth perceived by spiritual contemplations, and leaving behind us all human notions of godlike things, we still the activities of our minds, and reach (so far as this may be) into the Super-Essential Ray,⁴ wherein all kinds of knowledge so have their pre-existent limits (in a transcendently inexpressible manner), that we cannot conceive nor utter It, nor in any wise contemplate the same, seeing that It surpasseth all things, and wholly exceeds our knowledge, and super-essentially contains beforehand (all conjoined within Itself) the bounds of all natural sciences and forces (while yet

¹ 1 Thess. iv 16

² ἐν θειοτέρᾳ μίμησει τῶν ὑπερουρανίων νοῶν—i. e. the angels

³ Luke xx. 36

⁴ Meditation leads on to Contemplation, and the higher kind of Contemplation is performed by the *Via Negativa*.

Its force is not circumscribed by any), and so possesses, beyond the celestial Intelligences,¹ Its firmly fixed abode. For if all the branches of knowledge belong to things that have being, and if their limits have reference to the existing world, then that which is beyond all Being must also be transcendent above all knowledge²

5 But if It is greater than all Reason and all knowledge, and hath Its firm abode altogether beyond Mind and Being, and circumscribes, compacts, embraces and anticipates all things³ while Itself is altogether beyond the grasp of them all, and cannot be reached by any perception, imagination, conjecture, name, discourse, apprehension, or understanding, how then is our Discourse concerning the Divine Names to be accomplished, since we see that the Super-Essential Godhead is unutterable and nameless? Now, as we said when setting forth our Outlines of Divinity, the One, the Unknowable, the Super-Essential, the Absolute Good (I mean the Trinal Unity of Persons possessing the same Deity and Goodness), 'tis impossible to describe or to conceive in Its ultimate Nature, nay, even the angelical communions of the heavenly Powers Therewith which we describe as either Impulsions or Derivations⁴ from the Unknowable and blinding Goodness are themselves beyond utterance and knowledge, and belong to none but those angels who, in a manner beyond angelic knowledge, have been counted worthy

¹ i.e. The Angels I have throughout translated *ὑπερουράνιος* "celestial" instead of "super-celestial" Presumably the meaning is "beyond the *material* sky," or "celestial in a *transcendent* sense"

² The whole of this passage shows that there is a positive element in Unknowing

³ *παντῶν προληπτική*—i.e. contains them eternally before their creation

⁴ *ὡς εἴτε ἐπιβολὰς εἴτε παραδοχὰς χρῆ φάναι*—i.e. according as we describe the act from above or below God sends the impulse, the angels receive it.

thereof And godlike Minds,¹ angelically² entering (according to their powers) unto such states of union and being deified and united, through the ceasing of their natural activities, unto the Light Which surpasseth Deity, can find no more fitting method to celebrate its praises than to deny It every manner of Attribute³ For by a true and supernatural illumination from their blessed union Therewith, they learn that It is the Cause of all things and yet Itself is nothing, because It super-essentially transcends them all. Thus, as for the Super-Essence of the Supreme Godhead (if we would define the Transcendence of its Transcendent Goodness⁴) it is not lawful to any lover of that Truth which is above all truth to celebrate It as Reason or Power or Mind or Life or Being, but rather as most utterly surpassing all condition, movement, life, imagination, conjecture, name, discourse, thought, conception, being, rest, dwelling, union,⁵ limit, infinity, everything that exists And yet since, as the Subsistence⁶ of goodness, It, by the very fact of Its existence, is the Cause of all things, in celebrating the bountiful Providence of the Supreme Godhead we must draw upon the whole creation For It is both the central Force of all things, and also their final Purpose, and *is* Itself before them all, and they all subsist in It, and

¹ οἱ θεοειδείς νόες—*ε* human minds

² ἀγγελομιμητῶς "In a manner which imitates the angels"
Cf. Wordsworth, *Prelude*, xiv 108, 102 "Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound of harmony from heaven's remotest spheres"

³ This shows that the *Via Negativa* is based on an experience and not on a mere speculation

⁴ ὃ τι ποτέ ἐστίν ἢ τῆς ὑπεραγαθότητος ὑπερύπαρξις
⁵ "Union" (ἔνωσις) This word has more than one meaning in D, and hence occasional ambiguity It may = (1) Unity (*ε* that which makes an individual thing to be one thing), (2) Mental or Spiritual intercourse, (3) Physical intercourse, (4) Sense perception Here it = either (1) or (2), probably (1)

⁶ ἀγαθότητος ὑπαρξις—*ε* the ultimate Essence in which goodness consists

through the fact of Its existence the world is brought into being and maintained, and It is that which all things desire—those which have intuitive or discursive Reason seeking It through knowledge, the next rank of beings through perception, and the rest through vital movement or the property of mere existence belonging to their state¹ Conscious of this, the Sacred Writers celebrate It by every Name while yet they call It Nameless²

6 For instance, they call It Nameless when they say that the Supreme Godhead Itself, in one of the mystical visions whereby It was symbolically manifested, rebuked him who said "What is thy name?"³ and, as though bidding him not seek by any means of any Name to acquire a knowledge of God, made the answer "Why askest thou thus after My Name seeing it is secret?" Now is not the secret Name precisely that which is above all names⁴ and nameless, and is fixed beyond every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come? On the other hand, they attribute many names to It when, for instance, they speak of It as declaring "I am that I am,"⁵ or "I am the Life,"⁶ or "the Light,"⁷ or "God,"⁸ or "the Truth,"⁹ and when the Inspired Writers themselves celebrate the Universal Cause with many titles drawn from the whole created

¹ Man—Animal—Vegetable—Inorganic Matter For the thought of this whole passage, cf Shelley, *Adonais* "That Light whose smile kindles the universe" "The property of mere existence" = οὐσιώδης καὶ ἐκτικὴν ἐπιτηδεύματα. οὐσία = an individual existence Its highest meaning is a "personality," its lowest a "thing" οὐσιώδης refers generally to its lowest meaning and = "possessing mere existence," i.e. "belonging to the realm of inorganic matter" See Intr, p 4

² This shows that there is a *positive* element in D's *Via Negativa*.

³ Judges xiii 18

⁴ Phil. ii. 9, Eph. i. 21.

⁵ John xiv 6

⁶ Gen xxviii 13.

⁵ Ex. iii. 14.

⁷ John viii. 12.

⁹ John xiv 6

universe, such as "Good,"¹ and "Fair,"² and "Wise,"³ as "Beloved,"⁴ as "God of Gods" and "Lord of Lords"⁵ and "Holy of Holies,"⁶ as "Eternal,"⁷ as "Existent"⁸ and as "Creator of Ages,"⁹ as "Giver of Life,"¹⁰ as "Wisdom,"¹¹ as "Mind,"¹² as "Word,"¹³ as "Knower,"¹⁴ as "possessing beforehand all the treasures of knowledge,"¹⁵ as "Power,"¹⁶ as "Ruler,"¹⁷ as "King of kings,"¹⁸ as "Ancient of Days;"¹⁹ and as "Him that is the same and whose years shall not fail,"²⁰ as "Salvation,"²¹ as "Righteousness,"²² as "Sanctification,"²³ as "Redemption,"²⁴ as "Surpassing all things in greatness,"²⁵ and yet as being in "the still small breeze"²⁶ Moreover, they say that He dwells within our minds, and in our souls²⁷ and bodies,²⁸ and in heaven and in earth,²⁹ and that, while remaining Himself, He is at one and the same time within the world around it and above it (yea, above the sky and above existence), and they call Him a Sun,³⁰ a Star,³¹ and a Fire,³² and Water,³³ a Wind or Spirit,³⁴ a Dew,³⁵ a Cloud,³⁶ an Archetypal Stone,³⁷ and a Rock,³⁸ and All Creation,³⁹ Who yet (they declare) is no created thing

7 Thus, then, the Universal and Transcendent Cause must both be nameless and also possess the names of all things in order that It may truly be an universal Dominion, the Centre of creation on which all things depend, as on their Cause and

¹ Matt. xix. 17

⁴ Isa. v. 1

⁷ Deut. xxxiii. 27

¹⁰ Gen. i. 20, ¹¹ 7, Job x. 12, John x. 10

¹³ I Cor. ii. 16

¹⁶ Rev. xix. 1

²⁰ Ps. cii. 25

²⁴ Isa. xl. 15

²⁷ I Cor. vi. 19

³⁰ Rev. xxii. 16

³³ John iv. 24, Acts ii. 2

³⁸ Ps. cxviii. 22

² Ps. xxvii. 4

⁵ Ps. cxxxvi. 2, 3

⁸ Ex. iii. 14.

¹² John i. 1

¹⁷ Rev. i. 5

²¹ Ex. xv. 2

²⁵ I Kings xix. 12.

²⁸ Isa. lxvi. 1

³¹ Deut. iv. 24

³⁴ Hosea xiv. 5

³⁷ Ps. xxxi. 2, 3

³ Rom. xvi. 27

⁶ Isa. vi. 3

⁹ Gen. i. 1-8

¹¹ Prov. viii.

¹⁵ Col. ii. 3.

¹⁹ Dan. vii.

²³ I Cor. i. 30.

²⁶ John xiv. 17

²⁹ Ps. lxxxiv. 11

³² Ps. lxxxiv. 6

³⁵ Ex. xiii. 21

³⁹ I Cor. xv. 28

Origin and Goal, and that, according to the Scriptures, It may be all in all, and may be truly called the Creator of the world, originating and perfecting and maintaining all things, their Defence and Dwelling, and the Attractive Force that draws them and all this in one single, ceaseless, and transcendent act¹ For the Nameless Goodness is not only the cause of cohesion or life or perfection in such wise as to derive Its Name from this or that providential activity alone, nay, rather does It contain all things beforehand within Itself, after a simple and uncircumscribed manner through the perfect excellence of Its one and all-creative Providence, and thus we draw from the whole creation Its appropriate praises and Its Names

8 Moreover, the sacred writers proclaim not only such titles as these (titles drawn from universal² or from particular³ providences or providential activities⁴), but sometimes they have gained their images from certain heavenly visions⁵ (which in the holy precincts or elsewhere have illuminated the Initiates or the Prophets), and, ascribing to the super-luminous nameless Goodness titles drawn from all manner of acts and functions, have clothed It in human (fiery or amber) shapes⁶ or forms, and have spoken of Its Eyes,⁷ and Ears,⁸ and Hair,⁹ and Face,¹⁰ and Hands,¹¹ and Wings,¹² and Feathers,¹³ and Arms,¹⁴ and Back Parts,¹⁵ and Feet,¹⁶ and fashioned such mystical

¹ God is above Time

² ε γ "I am that I am," "Good," "Fair"

³ ε γ "Sun," "Star," "Rock," etc

⁴ ἀπὸ τῶν προνοιῶν ἢ προνοουμένων The first are the *faculties* of acting or being revealed in a certain way, the second are the *results* or manifestations of these faculties when in action

⁵ Thus the complete classification is (1) Analogies drawn from the material world, (α) universal, (β) particular, (2) psychic visions

⁶ Ezek i. 26, 27

⁷ Ps. x 5

⁸ James v 4.

⁹ Dan vii 9

¹⁰ Ps xxxiii 17

¹¹ Job x 8

¹² Ps xci 4

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Deut. xxxiii. 27

¹⁵ Ex xxxiii 23

¹⁶ Ex xxiv 10.

conceptions as its Crown,¹ and Throne,² and Cup,³ and Mixing Bowl,⁴ etc., concerning which things we will attempt to speak when we treat of Symbolical Divinity. At present, collecting from the Scriptures what concerns the matter in hand, and employing as our canon the rule we have described, and guiding our search thereby, let us proceed to an exposition of God's Intelligible⁵ Names, and as the Hierarchical Law directs us in all study of Divinity, let us approach these godlike contemplations (for such indeed they are⁶) with our hearts predisposed unto the vision of God, and let us bring holy ears to the exposition of God's holy Names, implanting holy Truths in holy instruments according to the Divine command, and withholding these things from the mockery and laughter of the uninitiate, or, rather, seeking to redeem those wicked men (if any such there be) from their enmity towards God. Thou, therefore, O good Timothy, must guard these truths according to the holy Ordinance, nor must thou utter or divulge the heavenly mysteries unto the uninitiate.⁷ And for myself I pray God grant me worthily to declare the beneficent and manifold Names of the Unutterable and Nameless Godhead, and that He do not take away the word of Truth out of my mouth.

¹ Rev. xiv. 14.

² Ps. lxxv. 8.

³ Ezek. i. 26, 27.

⁴ Prov. ix. 5.

⁵ τῶν νοητῶν θεωνυμιῶν—i. e. the Names belonging to God when revealed in the relative sphere, not those which belong to the ultimate Godhead as such. In fact, the Godhead, as such, is Nameless. See Intr., p. 7.

⁶ κυπλὸς εἰπεῖν—i. e. actually godlike because man is deified by them.

⁷ See *Myst. Theol.* I. 2, and cf. Matt. vii. 6.

CHAPTER II

*Concerning the Undifferencing and the Differentiation in Divinity, and the Nature of Divine Unification and Differentiation*¹

I. 'TIS the whole Being of the Supernal Godhead (saith the Scripture) that the Absolute Goodness hath defined and revealed² For in what other sense may we take the words of Holy Writ when it tells us how the Godhead spake concerning Itself, and said. "Why asketh thou me concerning the good? None is good save one, that is, God"³ Now this matter we have discussed elsewhere, and have shown that all the Names proper to God are always applied in Scripture not partially but to the whole, entire, full, complete Godhead, and that they all refer indivisibly, absolutely, unreservedly, and wholly to all the wholeness of the whole and entire Godhead. Indeed (as we made mention in the Outlines of Divinity), if any one deny that such utterance refers to the whole Godhead, he blasphemeth and profanely dares to divide the Absolute and Supreme Unity. We must, then, take them as referring unto the entire Godhead. For not only did the goodly Word Himself say "I am Good,"⁴ but

¹ περὶ ἡνωμένης καὶ διακεκριμένης θεολογίας καὶ τίς ἡ θεία ἔνωσις καὶ διάκρισις

² The point of this section is that God's Nature is not a sum total of separate Attributes. Therefore when we say that the Scriptural titles of God are only symbols and that the ultimate Godhead transcends them, we do not mean that they express only a part of His Nature (for His Nature has no parts), but that they dimly suggest His whole Nature. Hence, too, we cannot say that some of God's titles belong only to one separate Person of the Trinity and others only to the other Persons severally—e. g. The Trinity, and not the Father alone, is the Creator of the world. "The one world was made by the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Ghost" (St. Aug., *Com. on St. John*, Tr. XX. 9)

³ The title "Good" is applied to the whole Godhead. And if that title, then others too. Cf. Matt. xix. 17

⁴ John x. 11

also one of the inspired prophets speaks of the Spirit as Good¹ So, too, of the words "I Am that I Am"² If, instead of applying these to the whole Godhead, they wrest them to include only one part Thereof, how will they explain such passages as "Thus saith He that is and was and is to come, the Almighty,"³ or "Thou art the same,"⁴ or "The Spirit of Truth that is, and that proceedeth from the Father"?⁵ And if they deny that the whole Godhead is Life, how can that Sacred Word be true Which declared. "As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will,"⁶ and also, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth"?⁷ And as to the Dominion over the whole world belonging to the whole Godhead, it is impossible, methinks, to say (as far as concerns the Paternal and the Filial Godhead) how often in the Scriptures the Name of "Lord" is repeated as belonging both to the Father and to the Son moreover the Spirit, too, is Lord⁸ And the Names "Fair" and "Wise" are given to the whole Godhead, and all the Names that belong to the whole Godhead (*e.g.* "Deifying Virtue" and "Cause") Scripture introduces into all its praises of the Supreme Godhead comprehensively, as when it saith that "all things are from God,"⁹ and more in detail, as when it saith that "through Him are and to Him are all things created,"¹⁰ that "all things subsist in Him,"¹¹ and that "Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created"¹² And, to sum it all in brief,

¹ Ps. cxliii 10 This is a further argument arising out of what has been said above The point here is that we cannot limit the title "Good" to one Person of the Trinity (The notion that the Father is stern and the Son mollifies His sternness is false) The rest of the section takes other titles and shows how they are common to all Three Persons of the Trinity

² Ex. iii 14.

³ John xv 26

⁴ 2 Cor iii. 17

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ Rev 1 4.

⁷ John v 21

⁸ 1 Chron xxix 14.

⁹ Ps civ 30

¹⁰ Ps. cii 27

¹¹ John vi 63

¹² Rom xi. 36

the Divine Word Himself declared "I and the Father are one,"¹ and "All things that the Father hath are mine,"² and "All mine are thine, and thine are mine"³ And again, all that belongeth to the Father and to Himself He also ascribes in the Common Unity to the Divine Spirit, viz the Divine operations, the worship, the originating and inexhaustible creativeness and the ministration of the bountiful gifts And, methinks, that none of those nurtured in the Divine Scriptures will, except through perversity, gain-say it, that the Divine Attributes in their true and Divine signification all belong to the entire Deity And, therefore, having here briefly and partially (and more at large elsewhere) given from the Scriptures the proof and definition of this matter, we intend that whatever title of God's Entire Nature we endeavour to explain be understood as referring to the Godhead in Its entirety

2 And if any one say that we herein are introducing a confusion of all distinctions in the Deity,⁴ we for our part opine that such his argument is not sufficient even to persuade himself For if he is one utterly at enmity with the Scriptures, he will also be altogether far from our Philosophy; and if he recks not of the Holy Wisdom drawn from the Scriptures, how can he reckon aught of that method by which we would conduct him to an understanding of things Divine? But if he taketh Scriptural Truth as his Standard, this is the very Rule and Light by which we will (so far as in us lies) proceed straight to our defence, and will declare that the Sacred Science sometimes employs a method of Undifference and sometimes one of Differentiation, and that we must neither disjoin those things which are Undifferenced

¹ John x. 30

² John xvi. 15.

³ John xvii. 10

⁴ i. e. That we are seeking to destroy the distinction between the Persons of the Trinity

nor confuse those which are Differentiated, but following the Sacred Science to the best of our powers, we must lift up our eyes towards the Divine Rays; for, receiving thence the Divine Revelations as a noble Standard of Truth, we strive to preserve its treasure in ourselves without addition, diminution, or distortion, and in thus preserving the Scriptures, we also are preserved, and are moreover enabled by the same to the end that we may still preserve them and be by them preserved

3 Now Undifferentenced Names belong to the entire Godhead¹ (as we showed more fully from the Scriptures in the Outlines of Divinity) To this class belong the following "Super-Excellent," "Super-Divine," "Super-Essential," "Super-Vital," "Supra-Sapient," and thereto all those titles wherein the negative expresses excess, moreover, all those titles which have a causal sense, such as "Good," "Fair," "Existent," "Lifegiving," "Wise," and whatever titles are ascribed to the Cause of all good things from Its bountiful gifts² The differentiated Names, on the other hand, are the Super-Essential names and connotations of "Father," "Son," and "Spirit." In these cases the titles cannot be interchanged, nor are they held in common Again, besides this, the perfect and unchangeable subsistence of Jesus in our nature is differentiated, and so are all the mysteries of Love and Being therein displayed³

¹ The method of Undifference applies to the *ultimate* Godhead, that of Differentiation to the emanating Godhead The absolute and the relative planes of Being both belong to God On the absolute plane all distinctions are transcended, and the Persons exist in a manner in which They would appear to us to be merged, but on the relative plane we see that They are eternally distinct. See Intr, p 8

² Because we see things which are good, fair, existent, etc., we apply to God, their ultimate Cause, the titles "Good," "Fair," "Existent," etc. See p 36, n 6

³ *i. e.* Only the Second Person was Incarnate, was crucified, etc. "Mysteries of Love and Being" = *Φιλανθρωπίας οὐσιώδη μυστήρια.*

4. But needs must we, methinks, go deeper into the matter and thoroughly explain the difference between Undifference and Differentiation as concerning God, in order that our whole Discourse may be made clear, and, being free from all doubtfulness and obscurity, may (to the best of our powers) give a distinct, plain, and orderly statement of the matter. For, as I said elsewhere, the Initiates of our Divine Tradition designate the Undifferenced Attributes of the Transcendently Ineffable and Unknowable Permanence as hidden, incommunicable Ultimates, but the beneficent Differentiations of the Supreme Godhead, they call Emanations¹ and Manifestations, and following the Holy Scripture they declare that some Attributes belong especially to Undifference, and some, on the other hand, to Differentiation². For instance, they say concerning the Divine Unity, or Super-Essence, that the undivided Trinity holds in a common Unity without distinction Its Subsistence beyond Being, Its Godhead beyond Deity, Its Goodness beyond Excel-

¹ *προόδους τε καὶ ἐκφάνσεις*,—sc the Persons of the Trinity. See Intr, p 16

² The received text reads: *φᾶσι καὶ τῆς εἰρημένης ἐνώσεως ἰδίᾳ καὶ αὐτοῖς τῆς διακρίσεως εἶναι τινὰς ἰδικὰς καὶ ἐνώσεις καὶ διακρίσεις*. This, as it stands, must be translated "They say that certain qualities belong to the said Undifference, and that to Differentiation, on the other hand, belong certain principles of Unity and principles of Differentiation". This would mean that the Persons of the Trinity, though distinct from Each Other, yet have a Common Unity, or else that Each has a Unity of Its Own making It distinct from the Other Persons.

I have ventured, however, to emend the text by omitting the last six words and making the sentence end at *εἶναι*. I believe the last six words have crept in from a marginal gloss or variant, which ran (I imagine) as follows —*εἶναι τινὰς ἰδικὰς κ τ λ*. If the MS belonged to a family having seventeen or eighteen letters to a column the *εἶναι* after *διακρίσεως* would end a line, since there are 571 letters from the beginning of the chapter to the end of that word. Hence it would easily be confused with the *εἶναι* at the beginning of the gloss, which would thus creep into the text. And, since the added words amount to thirty-four letters, they would exactly fill two lines, thus making the interpolation easier. For the meaning, see Intr, p 6f

lence, the Identity, surpassing all things, of Its transcendently Individual Nature, Its Oneness above Unity, Its Namelessness and Multiplicity of Names, Its Unknowableness and perfect Intelligibility, Its universal Affirmation¹ and universal Negation² and that It possesses the mutual Abiding and Indwelling (as it were) of Its indivisibly supreme Persons in an utterly Undifferentiated and Transcendent Unity, and yet without any confusion³ even as the lights of lamps (to use visible and homely similes) being in one house and wholly interpenetrating one another, severally possess a clear and absolute distinction each from each, and are by their distinctions united into one, and in their unity are kept distinct. Even so do we see, when there are many lamps in a house, how that the lights of them all are unified into one undifferentiated light, so that there shineth forth from them one indivisible brightness, and no one, methinks, could separate the light of one particular lamp from the others, in isolation from the air which embraces them all, nor could he see one light without another, inasmuch as, without confusion, they yet are wholly commingled

Yea, if any one takes out of the dwelling one of the burning lamps, all its own particular light will therewith depart from the place without either carrying off in itself aught of the other lights or bequeathing any of its own brightness to the rest For, as

¹ Cf *Myst Theol* I 2 This universal Affirmation is not pantheism because evil, as such, is held to be non-existent. It is only all goodness that is affirmed of God, though He surpasses it. God is present in all things, but not equally in all

² "Yes" implies the possibility of "No," and "No" the possibility of "Yes" Thus "Yes" and "No" belong to the relative world. God's absolute existence is beyond such antithesis See *Intr*, p 4 f.

³ The Persons, though fused, are yet not confused because the Godhead *transcends* unity See *Intr*, p 5

I said, the entire and complete union of the lights one with another brought no confusion or commixture in any parts—and that though the light is literally embodied in the air and streams from the material substance of fire. The Super-Essential Unity of God, however, exceedeth (so we declare) not only the unions of material bodies, but even those of Souls and of Intelligences, which these Godlike and celestial Luminaries in perfect mutual interpenetration supernaturally and without confusion possess, through a participation corresponding to their individual powers of participating in the All-Transcendent Unity¹

5 There is, on the other hand, a Differentiation made in the Super-Essential Doctrine of God—not merely such as I have just mentioned (*viz.* that in the very Unity, Each of the Divine Persons possesses without confusion Its own distinct existence), but also that the Attributes of the Super-Essential Divine Generation are not interchangeable.² The Father alone is the Source of the Super-Essential Godhead, and the Father is not a Son, nor is the Son a Father; for the Divine Persons all preserve, Each without alloy, His own particular Attributes of praise. Such, then, are the instances of Undifference and of Differentiation in the Ineffable Unity and Subsistence of God. And if the term "Differentiation" be also applied to the bounteous act of Emanation whereby the Divine Unity, brimming Itself with goodness in the excess of Its Undifferenced Unity thus enters

¹ Material things are merged by being united (*e.g.* drops of water). Souls or angels being united through love (whereby they participate in God) are not merged but remain distinct even while being, as it were, fused into a single spiritual unity more perfect than the fusion of water with wine. The Persons of the Trinity are still more perfectly united and at the same time still more utterly distinct.

² Two kinds of Differentiation (1) Distinctness of Existence, (2) Difference of Functions

into Multiplicity,¹ yet an undifferentenced unity worketh even in those differentiated acts whereby, in ceaseless communications, It bestows Being, Life, and Wisdom, and those other gifts of the all-creative Goodness in respect of which (as we behold the communications and the participants thereof) we celebrate those things wherein the creatures supernaturally participate. Yea, 'tis a common and undifferentenced activity of the whole Godhead that It is wholly and entirely communicated unto each of them that share It and unto none merely in part,² even as the centre of a circle is shared by all the radii which surround it in a circle,³ and as there are many impressions of a seal all sharing in the seal which is their archetype while yet this is entire, nor is it only a part thereof that belongeth unto any of them. But the Incommunicable All-creative Godhead transcends all such symbols in that It is beyond Apprehension nor hath It any other mode of communion such as to join It unto the participants⁴

Perhaps, however, some one will say: "The seal is not entire and the same in all the printed copies" I answer that this is not due to the seal itself (for it gives itself wholly and identically to each), but the difference of the substances which share it makes the impressions of the one, entire, identical archetype to be different. For instance, if they are soft, plastic, and smooth, and have no print already, and are neither hard and resistent, nor yet melting and unstable, the imprint will be clear, plain, and per-

¹ D means that the Undifferentiated Godhead is actually present in all these creative activities. It is multiplied (as it were) in its energies, and yet It remains indivisible. See Intr, p 17

² D here touches on the fundamental difference between spiritual and material things Cf. Shelley - "True love has this different from gold or clay that to divide is not to take away"

³ Plotinus uses the same illustration (*Enn.* iv 1).

⁴ D is always on his guard against Pantheism.

manent; but if the aforesaid fitness should in aught be lacking, then the material will not take the impression and reproduce it distinctly, and other such results will follow as an unsuitable material must bring about.

6. Again, it is by a Differentiated act of God's benevolence that the Super-Essential Word should wholly and completely take Human Substance of human flesh and do and suffer all those things which, in a special and particular manner, belong to the action of His Divine Humanity. In these acts the Father and the Spirit have no share, except of course that they all share in the loving generosity of the Divine counsels and in all that transcendent Divine working of unutterable mysteries which were performed in Human Nature by Him Who as God and as the Word of God is Immutable¹. So do we strive to differentiate the Divine Attributes, according as these Attributes are Undifferenced or Differentiated.²

7. Now all the grounds of these Unifications, and Differentiations in the Divine Nature which the Scriptures have revealed to us, we have explained in the Outlines of Divinity, to the best of our abilities, treating separately of each. The latter class we have philosophically unravelled and unfolded, and so have sought to guide the holy and unspotted mind to contemplate the shining truths of Scripture, while the former class we have endeavoured (in accordance with Divine Tradition) to apprehend as Mysteries in a manner beyond the activities of our minds³. For

¹ Redemption is a work performed by the whole Trinity through the Second Person. (So, too, is Creation Cf. p. 65, n. 2.)

² We strive to distinguish the two planes of Being in God Cf. Athan. Creed. "Neither confounding the Persons," etc.

³ Undifference belongs to the ultimate Godhead, Differentiation to the distinction between the Three Persons of the Trinity. The former is the sphere of Mystical Theology, the latter is that of Dogmatic Theology. The former implies the *Via Negativa* the latter the *Via Affirmativa*.

all Divine things, even those that are revealed to us, are only known by their Communications Their ultimate nature, which they possess in their own original being, is beyond Mind and beyond all Being and Knowledge¹ For instance, if we call the Super-Essential Mystery by the Name of "God," or "Life," or "Being," or "Light," or "Word," we conceive of nothing else than the powers that stream Therefrom to us bestowing Godhead, Being, Life or Wisdom;² while that Mystery Itself we strive to apprehend by casting aside all the activities of our mind, since we behold no Deification,³ or Life, or Being, which exactly resembles the altogether and utterly Transcendent Cause of all things Again, that the Father is Originating Godhead while Jesus and the Spirit are (so to speak) Divine Off-shoots of the Paternal Godhead, and, as it were, Blossoms and Super-Essential Shinnings Thereof we learn from Holy Scripture; but how these things are so we cannot say, nor yet conceive.

8 Just so far can the powers of our minds attain as to see that all spiritual paternity and sonship is a gift bestowed from the all-transcendent Archetypal Fatherhood and Sonship both upon us and also upon the celestial Powers. whereby Godlike Minds receive

¹ Even the Differentiations finally lead us up into the Undifferentiated Godhead Where they transcend themselves (Cf p 70, n 3 and the passage in n 4 about the torches.) Into that region we cannot track them. But on the other side they flow out into creative activity, and thus are, in some degree, revealed.

² These terms may be thus classified —

Sphere of Activity	Nature of Gift.	Form under which Giver is manifested.
(i) <i>Grace</i>	Godhead	"God"
(ii) <i>Nature</i>		
(1) Material existence	Being	"Being"
(2) Vegetable and animal existence	Life	"Life"
(3) Human existence	Wisdom	"Light"

³ The doctrine of "Deification" is not a mere speculation It embodies an experienced fact See Intr, p 43

the states and names of Gods, and Sons of Gods, and Fathers of Gods, such paternity and sonship being perfected in a spiritual manner (*i.e.* incorporeally, immaterially, and invisibly) because the Divine Spirit setteth above all invisible Immateriality and Deification, and the Father and the Son, supernaturally transcend all spiritual fatherhood and sonship¹ For there is no exact similitude between the creatures and the Creative Originals,² for the creatures possess only such images of the Creative Originals as are possible to them, while the Originals Themselves transcend and exceed the creatures by the very nature of Their own Originality To employ human examples, we say that pleasant or painful conditions produce in us feelings of pleasure or pain while yet they possess not these feelings themselves, and we do not say that the fire which warms and burns is itself burnt or warmed Even so if any one says that Very Life lives, or that Very Light is enlightened, he will be wrong (according to my view) unless, perchance, he were to use these terms in a different sense from the ordinary one to mean that the qualities of created things pre-exist, after a superlative manner as touching their true Being in the Creative Originals.³

9 Even the plainest article of Divinity, namely the

¹ The act by which one spirit or soul imparts spiritual life to another is a manifestation in time of a Mystery which is eternally perfect in the Trinity, and would be impossible were it not ultimately rooted in that Mystery Just as all life draws its existence from the Divine *supra-vitality*, so all spiritual paternity draws its existence from the Divine *supra-paternity*

² τὰ αἰτία—*i.e.* The Persons of the Godhead

³ So St. Augustine constantly teaches that God acts not in the manner which we call activity, but by causing the creature itself to perform the action. Thus he explains God's rest on the Seventh Day to mean not that God Himself rested but that the creation now rested in Him Aristotle and his disciple, St. Thomas, teach that God moves all things simply through being desired by them. So God causes action without Himself acting (somewhat as fire causes warmth without feeling it) Cf p 87, n. 1

Incarnation and Birth of Jesus in Human Form, cannot be expressed by any Language or known by any Mind—not even by the first of the most exalted angels That He took man's substance is a mysterious truth, the which we have received ; but we know not how from the Virgin's seed He was formed in another manner than is natural, nor how His dry feet supporting the solid weight of His material body He walked upon the unstable substance of the water, nor understand we any of the other things which belong to the Supernatural Nature of Jesus Of these things I have spoken enough elsewhere ; and our renowned Teacher hath wonderfully¹ declared, in his *Elements of Divinity*, what he hath either learnt directly from the Sacred Writers, or else hath discovered from his cunning research concerning Scriptural truths through the much toil and labour which he bestowed thereon, or else hath had revealed unto him by some diviner inspiration wherein he received not only true spiritual notions but also true spiritual motions,² and by the kinship of his mind with them (if I may so express it) was perfected to attain without any other teacher to a mystical communion with these verities and a belief therein³ And to put before them in briefest compass the many blessed speculations of his ingenious mind thus speaketh he concerning Jesus in his compilation of the *Elements of Divinity*

10 From the ELEMENTS OF DIVINITY, by S Hierotheus

The Universal Cause which filleth all things is the Deity of Jesus, whereof the parts are in such wise tempered to the whole that It is neither whole nor part, and yet is at the same time whole and also part,

¹ ὑπερφύως The proper meaning of ὑπερφύης in the Dionysian writings appears to be "supernatural".

² οὐ μόνον μαθὼν ἀλλὰ καὶ παθὼν τὰ θεῖα.

³ πρὸς τὴν ἀδίδακτον αὐτῶν καὶ μυστικὴν ἀποτελεσθεὶς ἐγνωσιν καὶ πίστιν.

containing in Its all-embracing unity both part and whole, and being transcendent and antecedent to both¹ This Deity is perfect in those Beings that are imperfect as a Fount of Perfection,² It is Perfectionless³ in those that are perfect as transcending and anticipating their Perfection, It is the Form producing Form in the formless, as a Fount of every form, and it is Formless in the Forms, as being beyond all form, It is the Being that pervades all beings at once though not affected by them,⁴ and It is Super-Essential, as transcending every being, It sets all bounds of Authority and Order, and yet It has Its seal beyond all Authority and Order⁵ It is the Measure of the Universe,⁶ and it is Eternity, and above Eternity and before Eternity.⁷ It is an

¹ Being beyond Unity the Godhead is, of course, beyond the categories of whole and part. The Godhead is not a Whole because It is indivisible, nor a Part because there is nothing, on the ultimate plane, outside It. Yet It is a Whole because It includes the true existence of all things, and is Partitive because It contains the principle of separate Individuality whereby Christ possesses a Human Soul distinct from all other human souls, and whereby, too, we possess distinct and separate souls.

² God is in us even before we are in Him Cf Luke xvii. 21. Cf St. Aug, "Thou wast within, I was without." Also cf c. i. 3, c. iii. 1 "For the Trinity," etc. See Intr, p 6 on the use of the word "outside."

³ Perfection implies an object or purpose achieved Hence it implies a distinction between self and not self The Godhead is beyond such a distinction Compared with imperfection, It is perfect, compared with perfection, It is perfectionless (*ἀτελής*), or, rather, beyond Perfection (*ὑπερτελής*) and before it (*πρωτέλειος*), just as compared with impersonal things It is personal, and compared with personality It is non-personal, or, rather, supra personal

⁴ Cf p 75, n 3

⁵ Cf St. Paul on the Law and the Spirit The Law is deposited, as it were, by the Spirit and yet the Law cramps the Spirit, and the Spirit must break loose from this bondage

⁶ It gives the universe its bounds and distinctions.

⁷ Eternity, in the sense of "Very Eternity" (*αἰωνίων*), is an Emanation of the Godhead—a distinct view of Its transcendent state (cf Intr, p 17) It is the Divine Rest taken in the abstract, as Very Life is

Abundance in those Beings that lack, and a Super-Abundance in those that abound; unutterable, ineffable; beyond Mind, beyond Life, beyond Being, It supernaturally possesses the supernatural and super-essentially possesses the super-essential¹ And since that Supra-Divine Being hath in loving kindness come down from thence unto the Natural Estate, and verily took substance and assumed the name of Man (we must speak with reverence of those things which we utter beyond human thought and language), even in this act He possesses His Supernatural and Super-Essential Existence—not only in that He hath without change or confusion of Attributes shared in our human lot while remaining unaffected by that unutterable Self-Emptying as regards the fullness of His Godhead, but also because (most wonderful of all wonders!) He passed in His Supernatural and Super-Essential state through conditions of Nature and Being, and receiving from us all things that are ours, exalted them far above us²

11 So much for these matters Now let us proceed to the object of our discussion and endeavour to explain the Common and Undifferentenced Names belonging to God's Differentiated Being.³ And, that the subject of our investigation may be clearly defined beforehand, we give the name of Divine Differen-

perhaps the Divine Motion taken in the abstract. The Godhead includes both Rest and Motion by transcending them

¹ Behind Nature are certain higher supernatural possibilities (which are manifested, *e.g.*, in the Miracles of Christ and His Disciples), and beyond our personalities there is a mystery which is greater than our finite selves, and yet, in a sense, is our true selves The Godhead possesses in Itself the supernatural possibilities of Nature and the supra-personal possibilities of our personalities

² *i.e.* Christ did not merely keep His Godhead parallel, as it were, with His Manhood, but brought It into His Manhood and so exalted the Manhood

³ *i.e.* Let us explain what are the Names which belong indivisibly to all Three Persons of the Trinity.

tiation (as was said) to the beneficent Emanations of the Supreme Godhead¹ For bestowing upon all things and supernally infusing Its Communications unto the goodly Universe, It becomes differentiated without loss of Undifference;² and multiplied without loss of Unity, from Its Oneness it becomes manifold while yet remaining within Itself For example, since God is super-essentially Existent and bestows existence upon all things that are, and brings the world into being, that single Existence of His is said to become manifold through bringing forth the many existences from Itself, while yet He remains One in the act of Self-Multiplication, Undifferenced throughout the process of Emanation, and Full in the emptying process of Differentiation, Super-Essentially transcending the Being of all things, and guiding the whole world onwards by an indivisible act, and pouring forth without diminution His indefectible bounties Yea, being One and communicating of His Unity both unto every part of the world and also unto the whole, both unto that which is one and unto that which is many, He is One in an unchangeable and super-essential manner, being neither an unit in the multiplicity of things nor yet the sum total of such units Indeed, He is not an unity in this sense, and doth not participate in unity nor possess it,³ but He is an Unity in a manner far

¹ The word "Emanation" is here used in its very widest sense as including (1) the Persons of the Trinity, (2) Their creative activity as manifested in the Universal and the Particular stream of energy See *Intr*, p 17 The Differentiated Being of the Trinity underlies all the Differentiations of the creative process. The Trinity is differentiated on the plane of Eternity, then It emanates or energizes on the temporal plane, and thus It is manifested in all the differentiations of the universe, (especially in deified souls)

² God is indivisibly present in each separate deified soul (see *supra*, p 71), the sentence beginning "And if the term 'Differentiation' be also applied to the bounteous act," etc.

³ These two phrases well express the meaning of the title "Beyond

different from this, above all unity which is in the world, yea, He is an Indivisible Plurality, insatiable yet brim-full, producing, perfecting, and maintaining all unity and plurality. Moreover, since many, through Deification from Him, are made Gods¹ (so far as the Godlike capacity of each allows), there thus appears to be what is called a Differentiation² and a Reduplication of the One God, yet none the less He is the primal God, the Supra-Divine and Super-Essentially One God, who dwells Indivisibly within the separate and individual things, being an Undifferenced Unity in Himself and without any commixture or multiplication through His contact with the Many.³ And supernaturally perceiving this, thus speaketh (by inspiration, in his holy writings) that Guide unto Divine illumination by whom both we and our teacher are led, that mighty man in things Divine, that Luminary of the world. For though (saith he) there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. For in divine things the undifferenced Unities are of more might than the Differentiations⁴ and hold the foremost place and retain their state of Undifference even after the One has, without departing from Its oneness, entered into Differentiation. These Differentiations or beneficent Emanations of the whole

Unity" (*ὁμορηνωμένη*), which I have generally translated, like *ἡνωμένη*, as "Undifferenced"

¹ τῇ δὲ αὐτοῦ θεώσει . . . θεῶν πολλῶν γιγνομένων See Intr., p. 43.

² Cf. p. 71, n. 1.

³ The fullness of God's Unity is manifested, (1) in all the multiplicity of the material world, (2) after a higher manner in the deified souls of men and in angels.

⁴ Each deified soul is a differentiation of God (cf. p. 71, n. 1), yet the Unity of God transcends them all, even after God has thus poured Himself into them.

Godhead—whereby Its Undifferenced Nature is shared in common¹—we shall (so far as in us lies) endeavour to describe from the Divine Names which reveal them in the Scriptures, having now made this clear beforehand (as hath been said) that every Name of the Divine beneficent Activity unto whichever of the Divine Persons it is applied, must be taken as belonging, without distinction, to the whole entirety of the Godhead.²

CHAPTER III

What is the power of Prayer? Also concerning the Blessed Hierotheus and concerning Reverence and the Writing of Divinity

I AND first of all, if it like thee, let us consider the highest Name, even “Goodness,” by which all the Emanations of God are conjointly revealed³ And let us begin with an invocation of the Trinity, the Which, as It surpasseth Goodness, and is the Source of all goodness, doth reveal all conjoined together Its own good providences⁴ For we must first lift up our minds in prayer unto the Primal Goodness, and by drawing nearer Thereunto, we must thus be initiated into the mystery of those good gifts which are rooted in Its being For the Trinity is nigh unto all things, and yet not all things are nigh unto It.⁵ And when we call upon It with holy prayers and unspotted

¹ : : These active Manifestations whereby God enters into each part of the universe, yet without loss of Unity.

² See the beginning of this chapter.

³ All God's activities are good

⁴ The particular activities of God exist as one Act in Him, cf p 79,

n. 2 So St. Thomas (following Aristotle) calls Him *Actus Purus*.

⁵ Cf. p. 77, n. 1.

mind and with our souls prepared for union with God, then are we also nigh Thereto; for It is not in space, so as to be absent from any spot, or to move from one position to another¹ Nay, to speak of It as omnipresent doth not express Its all-transcendent all-embracing Infinitude² Let us then press on in prayer, looking upwards to the Divine benignant Rays, even as if a resplendent cord were hanging from the height of heaven unto this world below, and we, by seizing it with alternate hands in one advance, appeared to pull it down; but in very truth instead of drawing down the rope (the same being already nigh us above and below), we were ourselves being drawn upwards to the higher Refulgence of the resplendent Rays Or even as, having embarked on a ship and clinging to the cables, the which being stretched out from some rock unto us, presented themselves (as it were) for us to lay hold upon them, we should not be drawing the rock towards ourselves, but should, in very truth, be drawing ourselves and the vessel towards the rock; as also, conversely, if any one standing upon the vessel pushes away the rock that is on the shore, he will not affect the rock (which stands immovable) but will separate himself therefrom, and the more he pushes it so much the more will he be staving himself away Hence, before every endeavour, more especially if the subject be Divinity, must we begin with prayer: not as though we would pull down to ourselves that Power which is

¹ This is profound. Spatial metaphors are always dangerous, though unavoidable, in Theology In space if A is touching B then B must be touching A In the spiritual world this is not so. God is near me (or rather *in* me), and yet I may be far from God because *I may be far from my own true self* I must seek my true self where it is, in God It is the paradox of Personality that my true self is outside my self and I can only gain it by casting aside this counterfeit "self" Cf. p. 77, n. 1, and Intr., p. 15

² Even the word "omnipresent" suggests that God is in space, whereas really His existence is non-spatial.

nigh both everywhere and nowhere, but that, by these remembrances and invocations of God, we may commend and unite ourselves Thereunto

2 Now perhaps there is need of an explanation why, when our renowned teacher Hierotheus hath compiled¹ his wonderful *Elements of Divinity*, we have composed other Tractates of Divinity, and now are writing this present as if his work were not sufficient. Now if he had professed to deal in an ordered system with all questions of Divinity, and had gone through the whole sum of Divinity with an exposition of every branch, we should not have gone so far in madness or folly as to suppose that we could touch these problems with a diviner insight than he, nor would we have cared to waste our time in a vain repetition of those same truths, more especially since it would be an injury to a teacher whom we love were we thus to claim for ourselves the famous speculations and expositions of a man who, next to Paul the Divine, hath been our chief preceptor. But since, in his lofty "Instructions on Divinity," he gave us comprehensive and pregnant definitions fitted to our understanding, and to that of such amongst us as were teachers of the newly initiated souls, and bade us unravel and explain with whatever powers of reason we possessed, the comprehensive and compact skeins of thought spun by his mighty intellect, and since thou hast thyself oftentimes urged us so to do, and hast remitted his treatise to us as too sublime for comprehension, therefore we, while setting him apart (as a teacher of advanced and perfect spirits) for those above the commonalty, and as a kind of second Scriptures worthy to follow the Inspired Writings, will yet teach Divine Truths, according to our capacity, unto those who are our peers. For if solid food is suited

¹ τὰς θεολογικὰς στοιχειώσεις ὑπερφυῶς συναγαγόντες

only to the perfect, what degree of perfection would it need to give this food to others? Wherefore we are right in saying that the direct study of the spiritual¹ Scriptures and the comprehensive teaching of them need advanced capacities, while the understanding and the learning of the matter which contribute thereto is suited to the inferior Initiators and Initiates.² We have, however, carefully observed the principle Whatsoever things our Divine Preceptor has thoroughly dealt with and made clearly manifest we have never in any wise ventured thereon, for fear of repetition, nor given the same explanation of the passage whereof he treated. For³ even among our inspired Hierarchs (when, as thou knowest, we with him and many of our holy brethren met together to behold that mortal body, Source of Life, which received the Incarnate God,⁴ and James, the brother of God, was there, and Peter, the chief and highest of the Sacred Writers, and then, having beheld it, all the Hierarchs there present celebrated, according to the power of each, the omnipotent goodness of the Divine weakness) on that occasion, I say, he surpassed all the Initiates next to the Divine Writers,

¹ Or "intelligible" (*νοητῶν*) Cf. p. 52, n. 1. The Scriptures are expressed in symbolic terms which our minds can grasp Hierotheus was inspired to penetrate to the ultimate truth enshrined in these symbols Thus he was able not only to assimilate this solid food himself but also to give it to others Apparently Hierotheus passed through certain extraordinary psychic experiences, which are described in his writings. These particular experiences D has not himself passed through But he believes that his own teaching may clear the ground, and so be a preliminary to such flights He is chiefly explaining principles, but these principles may lead the way to a true experience. St. Paul and other Scriptural writers experienced such extraordinary psychic states, though they do not speak of them in the extravagant terms apparently used by Hierotheus Cf. 2 Cor. xii. 2-4.

² τῶν ὑφειμένων καθιερωταῖς καὶ ἐρρωμένοις

³ sc It would be an impiety to do so, for he is almost equal to the Scriptural Writers, as he showed when he met with them to view the body of the B V M

⁴ Cf. p. 1, n. 1

yea, he was wholly transported, was wholly outside of himself, and was so moved by a communion with those Mysteries he was celebrating, that all who heard him and saw him and knew him (or rather knew him not) deemed him to be rapt of God and endued with utterance Divine. But why should I tell thee of the divine things that were uttered in that place? For, unless I have forgotten who I am, I know that I have often heard from thee certain fragments of those enraptured praises, so earnest hast thou been with all thy soul to follow heavenly things

3 But, to say nothing of those mystical experiences (since they cannot be told unto the world, and since thou knowest them well), when it behoved us to communicate these things unto the world and to bring all whom we might unto that holy knowledge we possessed, how he surpassed nearly all the holy teachers in the time he devoted to the task, in pureness of mind, in exactness of exposition, and in all other holy qualities, to such a degree that we could not attempt to gaze upon such spiritual radiance. For we are conscious in ourselves and well aware that we cannot sufficiently perceive those Divine Truths which are granted to man's perception, nor can we declare and utter those elements of Divine Knowledge which are given unto man to speak. We fall very short of that understanding which the Divine men possessed concerning heavenly truths, and verily, from excess of reverence, we should not have ventured to listen, or give utterance to any truths of Divine philosophy, were it not that we are convinced in our mind that such knowledge of Divine Truth as is possible must not be disregarded. This conviction was wrought within us, not only by the natural impulse of our minds, which yearn and strive for such vision of supernatural things as may be

attained, but also by the holy ordinance of Divine Law itself, which, while it bids us not to busy ourselves in things beyond us because such things are both beyond our merits and also unattainable,¹ yet earnestly exhorts us to learn all things within our reach, which are granted and allowed us, and also generously to impart these treasures unto others.² In obedience to these behests we, ceasing not through weariness or want of courage in such search for Divine Truth as is possible, yea, and not daring to leave without assistance those who possess not a greater power of contemplation than ourselves, have set ourselves to the task of composition, in no vain attempt to introduce fresh teaching, but only seeking by more minute and detailed investigations to make more clear and plain that which the true Hierotheus hath said in brief.

CHAPTER IV

*Concerning "Good," "Light," "Beautiful," "Desire,"
"Ecstasy," "Jealousy" Also that Evil is neither existent
nor sprung from anything existent nor inherent in existent
things*

1 NOW let us consider the name of "Good" which the Sacred Writers apply to the Supra-Divine God-head in a transcendent manner, calling the Supreme Divine Existence Itself "Goodness" (as it seems to me) in a sense that separates It from the whole creation, and meaning, by this term, to indicate that the Good, under the form of Good-Being,³ extends Its goodness by the very fact of Its existence unto all

¹ Eccles. iii. 21, Ps cxxx. 1
² ὡς εὐαγγέλιον ἀγαθόν

³ 2 Tim. ii. 2

things¹ For as our sun, through no choice or deliberation, but by the very fact of its existence, gives light to all those things which have any inherent power of sharing its illumination, even so the Good (which is above the sun, as the transcendent archetype by the very mode of its existence is above its faded image) sends forth upon all things according to their receptive powers, the rays of Its undivided Goodness. Through these all Spiritual Beings and faculties and activities (whether perceived or percipient²) began; through these they exist and possess a life incapable of failure or diminution, and are untainted by any corruption or death or materiality or birth, being separate above all instability and flux and restlessness of change. And whereas they are bodiless and immaterial they are perceived by our minds, and whereas they are minds themselves, they possess a supernatural perception and receive an illumination (after their own manner) concerning the hidden nature of things,³ from whence they pass on their own knowledge to other kindred spirits Their rest is in the Divine Goodness, wherein they are grounded, and This Goodness maintains them and protects them and feasts them with Its good things Through desiring this they possess their being and their blessedness, and, being conformed thereto (according

¹ God's activity cannot be distinguished from Himself Cf p 81, n. 4. God acts simply by being what He is—by being Good. This fits in with the doctrine that He creates the world as being the Object of its desire He *attracts* it into existence

² αἱ νοῦται καὶ νοεταὶ πᾶσαι καὶ οὐραναὶ καὶ οὐράνιοι καὶ ἐνέργειαι Angels and men are percipient Essences, their powers when quiescent or dormant on the one hand and active on the other are respectively percipient faculties and activities But angels and men with their faculties and activities can also be perceived. Cf next sentence

³ This doctrine may be based on some psychic experience enjoyed by D or recounted to him George Fox received an experience of this kind in which he had an intuitive knowledge concerning the hidden properties of plants. See his Diary near the beginning

to their powers), they are goodly, and, as the Divine Law commands, pass on to those that are below them, of the gifts which have come unto them from the Good.

2. Hence have they their celestial orders, their self-unities, their mutual indwellings, their distinct Differences, the faculties which raise the lower unto the higher ranks, the providences of the higher for those beneath them, their preservation of the properties belonging to each faculty, their unchanging introversions,¹ their constancy and elevation in their search for the Good, and all the other qualities which we have described in our book concerning the Properties and Orders of the Angels.² Moreover all things appertaining to the Celestial Hierarchy, the angelic Purifications, the Illuminations and the attainments which perfect them in all angelic perfection and come from the all-creative and originating Goodness, from whence it was given to them to possess their created goodness, and to manifest the Secret Goodness in themselves, and so to be (as it were) the angelic Evangelists of the Divine Silence and to stand forth as shining lights revealing Him that is within the shrine. And next those sacred and holy Minds, men's souls and all the excellences that belong to souls derive their being from the Super-Excellent Goodness. So do they possess intelligence, so do they preserve their living being³ immortal, so is it they exist at all, and can, by straining towards the living angelic powers, through

¹ Lit. "Revolutions." (αἱ περί ἐαυτὰς ἀμετάπτωτοι συνελξεις). In Dante's *Paradiso* the souls of the Redeemed all move with a circular motion. This symbolizes an activity of spiritual concentration. Cf. iv 8, 9

² The *Celestial Hierarchy* is among D's extant works. It is referred to by Dante and was the chief source of mediæval angelology.

³ τὴν οὐσιώδη ζωὴν—i.e. life as such, mere life, the life which they share with animals and plants

their good guidance mount towards the Bounteous Origin of all things, so can they (according to their measure) participate in the illuminations which stream from above and share the bounteous gift (as far as their power extends) and attain all the other privileges which we have recounted in our book, *Concerning the Soul*. Yea, and the same is true, if it must needs be said, concerning even the irrational souls, or living creatures, which cleave the air, or tread the earth, or crawl upon the ground, and those which live among the waters or possess an amphibious life, and all that live buried and covered in the earth—in a word all that possess a sensitive soul or life. All these are endowed with soul and life because the Good exists. And all plants derive from the Good that life which gives them nourishment and motion, and even whatsoever has no life or soul exists through the Good, and thus came into the estate of being.¹

3 Now if the Good is above all things (as indeed It is) Its Formless Nature produces all-form; and in It alone Not-Being is an excess of Being,² and Lifelessness an excess of Life and Its Mindless state is an excess of Wisdom,³ and all the Attributes of

¹ The existence of the whole creation—angels, men, animals, and vegetables, dead matter—is in the Good. It has not, in the ordinary sense, made them, but they are grounded in It and draw their existence from it and would not exist but for it. They exist not through any particular activity It exerts but solely because It Is.

² "Being" implies finite relations, for one thing must be distinguished from another. If a thing is itself, it is not something else, this thing is not that. The Good is beyond this distinction, for nothing (on the ultimate plane) is outside It. See *Intr*, p. 5.

³ This apparently profitless speculation really suggests profound spiritual mysteries. Love is the one reality and love is self realization through self sacrifice. We must lose our life to find it. We must, through the excess of spiritual life within us, seek to be (as it were) lifeless, so that this excess of life may still be ours. And such was the Incarnate Life of Christ and such is the Life of God in eternity. So too the wisdom of Christ is, from a worldly point of view, foolishness.

the Good we express in a transcendent manner by negative images¹ And if it is reverent so to say, even that which *is not* desires the all-transcendent Good and struggles itself, by its denial of all things, to find its rest in the Good which verily transcends all being

4. Nay, even the foundation and the boundaries of the heavens (as we forgot to say while

For worldly wisdom = self seeking, but the Wisdom of Christ = self abandonment. In fact Heavenly Wisdom = Love Cf 1 Cor 1 25, III 18, 19

¹ That which *Is Not* = Evil (*vide infra* in this chapter). Cf Intr, p 20 The Good is Non-Existent as being beyond existence, evil is non-existent as being contrary to it. Thus evil is by its very nature trying as it were to be Good.

This also looks like a barren paradox and yet it may contain a spiritual truth. Evil is, in the words of Goethe, "the spirit that denies" It is destructive, e.g. injustice, cruelty, immorality, etc., undermine or overwhelm civilization and so destroy it. But the Good supersedes civilization and so in a sense destroys it Cf the eschatological teaching of Christ Civilization, art, morality, etc., are good so far as they go, but imperfect. Being halfway, as it were, between Good and evil, and being of necessity neither wholly the one nor wholly the other, they must disappear wherever the one or the other completely triumphs. Christ's teaching on Marriage illustrates this Marriage is sacred, and divorce is wrong, because it seeks to abolish Marriage. And yet Marriage is finally abolished in heaven St. Paul's antithesis of Law and Spirit is another example. The Law is good and yet is not the Good Sin is contrary to the Law, but the Spirit is contrary to the Law in another sense and so supersedes it. So too with art A modern vandal is indifferent to beauty because he is below it, a Mediæval Saint became sometimes indifferent to beauty by rising to a super sensuous plane above it. Greek idolatry is a higher thing than Calvinism, but the Christianity of the New Testament is a higher thing than Greek idolatry The Saints sometimes employ negatives in one sense and those who are not saints employ the same negatives in another, whence disaster Much of Nietzsche's language (e.g. the phrase "Beyond Good and Evil") might have been used by a Mediæval Christian Mystic, but Nietzsche did not generally mean what the Christian Mystic would have meant by it So too with pain All pain is in itself bad, being a negation of our personality And yet a self abnegation springing from Love which bravely bears pain is the highest kind of Good "The devil . put it into the heart of Judas to betray" Christ, and yet the Passion was in accordance with "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"

thinking of other matters) owe their origin to the Good. Such is this universe, which lessens not nor grows, and such the noiseless movements (if noiseless they be)¹ of the vast heavenly revolution, and such the starry orders whose light is fixed as an ornament of heaven, and such the various wanderings of certain stars—especially the repeated and returning orbits of those two luminaries to which the Scripture giveth the name of "Great,"² whereby we reckon our days and nights and months and years, which define the round of time and temporal events and give them measurement, sequence, and cohesion. And what shall I say concerning the sun's rays considered in themselves? From the Good comes the light which is an image of Goodness, wherefore the Good is described by the name of "Light," being the archetype thereof which is revealed in that image. For as the Goodness of the all-transcendent Godhead reaches from the highest and most perfect forms of being unto the lowest, and still is beyond them all, remaining superior to those above and retaining those below in its embrace, and so gives light to all things that can receive It, and creates and vitalizes and maintains and perfects them, and is the Measure³ of the Universe and its Eternity,⁴ its Numerical Principle,⁵ its Order, its

¹ εἰ οὕτω χρεὶ φάναί Music of the Spheres D is alluding to the ancient belief in the

² Gen. 1. 16

³ μέτρον All things have their pre-existent limits in the Super-Essence.

⁴ αἰών—i. e. The Permanent Principle underlying its temporal process. This and the next phrase explain what is meant by the words "the Measure of the universe." The Good sets bounds to the world (1) temporally, because Eternity is the Fount of Time, (2) spatially, because Transcendent Unity is the Fount of Number. All temporal things are permanent in God, and all diversities are one in Him.

⁵ All number has its roots in the Good. Elsewhere D says that the Good being *beyond* Unity, is a Multiplicity as well as an Unity. Cf. Intr., p. 5.

Embracing Power, its Cause and its End ¹ even so this great, all-bright and ever-shining sun, which is the visible image of the Divine Goodness, faintly echoing the activity of the Good, illumines all things that can receive its light while retaining the utter simplicity of light, and expands above and below throughout the visible world the beams of its own radiance. And if there is aught that does not share them, this is not due to any weakness or deficiency in its distribution of the light, but is due to the unreceptiveness of those creatures which do not attain sufficient singleness to participate therein. For verily the light passeth over many such substances and enlightens those which are beyond them, and there is no visible thing unto which the light reacheth not in the exceeding greatness of its proper radiance.² Yea, and it contributes to the birth of material bodies and brings them unto life, and nourishes them that they may grow, and perfects and purifies and renews them. And the light is the measure and the numerical principle of seasons and of days and of all our earthly Time, for 'tis the selfsame light (though then without a form) which, Moses the Divine declares, marked even that first period of three days which was at the beginning of time. And like as Goodness draweth all things to Itself, and is the great Attractive Power which unites things that are sundered³ (being as It is, the God-head and the Supreme Fount and Producer of Unity),

¹ Here we get once more the Aristotelian classification of causes. The Good is —

- (i) Formal Cause (i) immanent in the world (Order—τάξις),
- (2) containing the world (Embracing Power—περιοχή)
- (ii) Efficient Cause (Cause—αἰτία)
- (iii) Final Cause (End—τέλος)

² The light permeates water but it does not permeate a stone. It passes over the stone and permeates the water beyond it.

³ ἀρχισυνάγωγος ἐστὶ τῶν ἐσκεδασμένων.

and like as all things desire It as their beginning, their cohesive power and end, and like as 'tis the Good (as saith the Scripture) from which all things were made and are (having been brought into existence thence as from a Perfect Cause), and like as in the Good all things subsist, being kept and controlled in an almighty Receptacle,¹ and like as unto the Good all things are turned (as unto the proper End of each), and like as after the Good all things do yearn—those that have mind and reason seeking It by knowledge, those that have perception seeking It by perception, those that have no perception seeking It by the natural movement of their vital instinct, and those that are without life and have mere existence seeking It by their aptitude for that bare participation whence this mere existence is theirs²—even so doth the light (being as it were Its visible image) draw together all things and attract them unto Itself those that can see, those that have motion, those that receive Its light and warmth, those that are merely held in being by Its rays,³ whence the sun is so called because it summeth⁴ all things and uniteth the scattered elements of the world. All material things desire the sun, for they desire either to see or to move and to receive light and warmth and to be maintained in existence by the light I say not (as was feigned by the ancient myth) that the sun is the God and Creator of this Universe, and therefore takes the visible world under his special care, but I say that the “invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things

¹ ὡς ἐν παντοκρατορικῇ πυθμένι

² (1) Man, (2) Animal, (3) Vegetable, (4) Matter

³ This seems to imply that matter itself could not exist without the influence of the light. Perhaps this belief rests on Gen 1 1, 2.

⁴ ἡλίου ἔτι πάντα ἀσφαλῆ ποιεῖ With the *naïf* etymology cf. 1v. 5.

that are made, even His eternal power and God-head"¹

5. But these things are dealt with in the "Symbolic Divinity" Here I desire to declare what is the spiritual meaning of the name "Light" as belonging to the Good.² The Good God is called Spiritual Light because He fills every heavenly mind with spiritual light, and drives all ignorance and error from all souls where they have gained a lodgment, and giveth them all a share of holy light and purges their spiritual eyes from the mist of ignorance that surrounds them, and stirs and opens the eyes which are fast shut and weighed down with darkness, and gives them first a moderate illumination, then (when they taste the Light and desire It more) He giveth Himself in greater measure and shineth in more abundance on them "because they have loved much," and ever He constraineth them according to their powers of looking upwards.

6 And so that Good which is above all light is called a Spiritual Light because It is an Originating Beam and an Overflowing Radiance, illuminating with its fullness every Mind above the world, around it, or within it,³ and renewing all their spiritual powers, embracing them all by Its transcendent compass and exceeding them all by Its transcendent elevation And It contains within Itself, in a simple form, the entire ultimate principle of light,⁴ and is

¹ Rom. i. 20 The sun is not personal or supra personal But its impersonal activity is an emblem, as it were, of God's supra personal activity

² Two worlds (1) Nature, (2) Grace. God is revealed in both, the former was apparently the subject of the *Symbolic Divinity*, the latter is that of the present treatise.

³ Men and different orders of angels

⁴ Material light is diffused in space and hence is divisible. The Spiritual Light is indivisible, being totally present to each illuminated mind Hence the Spiritual Light is simple in a way that the material light is not.

the Transcendent Archetype of Light, and, while bearing the light in its womb, It exceeds it in quality and precedes it in time, and so conjoineth together all spiritual and rational beings, uniting them in one.¹ For as ignorance leadeth wanderers astray from one another, so doth the presence of Spiritual Light join and unite together those that are being illuminated, and perfects them and converts them toward that which truly Is—yea, converts them from their manifold false opinions and unites their different perceptions, or rather fancies, into one true, pure and coherent knowledge, and filleth them with one unifying light.

7 This Good is described by the Sacred Writers as Beautiful and as Beauty, as Love or Beloved, and by all other Divine titles which befit Its beautifying and gracious fairness. Now there is a distinction between the titles "Beautiful" and "Beauty" applied to the all-embracing Cause. For we universally distinguish these two titles as meaning respectively the qualities shared and the objects which share therein. We give the name of "Beautiful" to that which shares in the quality of beauty, and we give the name of "Beauty" to that common quality by which all beautiful things are beautiful. But the Super-Essential Beautiful is called "Beauty" because of that quality which It imparts to all things severally according to their nature,² and because It is the Cause of the harmony and splendour in all things, flashing forth upon them all, like light, the beautifying communications of Its originating ray, and because It summons all things to *fare* unto Itself (from whence It hath the name of "Fairness"³), and because It

¹ All our spiritual and mental powers are due to the same Spiritual Light working in each one of us. Cf Wordsworth "Those mysteries of Being which have made and shall continue evermore to make of the whole human race one brotherhood"

² Cf II. 8

³ ὡς πάντα πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καλοῦν (ἄθεν καὶ κάλλος λέγεται) Cf IV. 4.

draws all things together in a state of mutual interpenetration. And it is called "Beautiful" because It is All-Beautiful and more than Beautiful, and is eternally, unvaryingly, unchangeably Beautiful, incapable of birth or death or growth or decay, and not beautiful in one part and foul in another, nor yet at one time and not at another; nor yet beautiful in relation to one thing but not to another, nor yet beautiful in one place and not in another (as if It were beautiful for some but were not beautiful for others), nay, on the contrary, It is, in Itself and by Itself, uniquely and eternally beautiful, and from beforehand It contains in a transcendent manner the originating beauty of everything that is beautiful. For in the simple and supernatural nature belonging to the world of beautiful things,¹ all beauty and all that is beautiful hath its unique and pre-existent Cause. From this Beautiful all things possess their existence, each kind being beautiful in its own manner, and the Beautiful causes the harmonies and sympathies and communities of all things. And by the Beautiful all things are united together and the Beautiful is the beginning of all things, as being the Creative Cause which moves the world and holds all things in existence by their yearning for their own Beauty. And It is the Goal of all things, and their Beloved, as being their Final Cause (for 'tis the desire of the Beautiful that brings them all into existence), and It is their Exemplar² from which they derive their definite limits, and hence the Beautiful is the

¹ The ultimate nature of all beautiful things is a simple and supernatural Element common to them all and manifested in them all. The law of life is that it has its true and ultimate being outside it. The true beauty of all beautiful things is outside them in God. Hence all great art (even when not directly religious) tends towards the Supernatural or has a kind of supernatural atmosphere.

² παραδειγματικόν—i.e. the ultimate Law of their being, the *Idea* or Type.

same as the Good, inasmuch as all things, in all causation, desire the Beautiful and Good, nor is there anything in the world but hath a share in the Beautiful and Good. Moreover our Discourse will dare to aver that even the Non-Existent¹ shares in the Beautiful and Good, for Non-Existence² is itself beautiful and good when, by the Negation of all Attributes, it is ascribed Super-Essentially to God. This One Good and Beautiful is in Its oneness the Cause of all the many beautiful and good things. Hence comes the bare existence of all things, and hence their unions,³ their differentiations, their identities, their differences,⁴ their similarities, their dissimilarities, their communions of opposite things,⁵ the unconfused distinctions of their interpenetrating elements,⁶ the providences of the Superiors,⁷ the interdependence of the Co-ordinates, the responses of the Inferiors,⁸ the states of permanence wherein all keep their own identity. And hence again the intercommunion of all things according to the power of each, their harmonies and sympathies (which do not merge them) and the co-ordinations of the whole.

¹ τὸ μὴ ὂν—i.e. that mere nothingness which is manifested either as (1) formless "matter" or (2) evil. See Intr., p. 20.

² Evil is non-existent in one sense. The Good is Non-Existent in another. Cf. p. 90, n. 1.

³ ἐνώσεις, διακρίσεις, ταυτότητες, ἐτερότητες.

⁴ Hence parts are united into wholes and wholes articulated into parts, and hence each thing is identical with itself and distinct from everything else.

⁵ e.g. Moisture interpenetrates the solid earth.

⁶ e.g. In a piece of wet ground the water is water and the earth is earth.

⁷ αἱ πρόνοιαι τῶν ὑπερέτερων. Lit. "the providences," etc., e.g. the influence of the light without which, D holds, the material world could not exist. Or this and the following may refer to different ranks of angels, or to angels and men.

⁸ αἱ ἐπιστροφαὶ τῶν καταδεεστέρων. Lit. "the conversions," etc. e.g. Matter (according to his theory) responds to the influence of the light. And men are influenced by angels, and the lower angels by the higher.

universe;¹ the mixture of elements therein and the indestructible ligaments of things; the ceaseless succession of the recreative process in Minds and Souls and in Bodies, for all have rest and movement in That Which, above all rest and all movement, grounds each one in its own natural laws and moves each one to its own proper movement.²

8 And the Heavenly Minds are spoken of as moving (1) in a circular manner, when they are united to the beginningless and endless illuminations of the Beautiful and Good;³ (2) straight forward, when they advance to the providential guidance of those beneath them and unerringly accomplish their designs,⁴ and (3) with spiral motion, because, even while providentially guiding their inferiors, they remain immutably in their self-identity,⁵ turning unceasingly around the Beautiful and Good whence all identity is sprung.

9 And the soul hath (1) a circular movement—viz. an introversion⁶ from things without and the unified concentration⁷ of its spiritual powers—which gives it a kind of fixed revolution, and, turning it from the multiplicity without, draws it together first into itself,⁸ and then (after it has reached this unified condition) unites it to those powers which are a

¹ The point of this section is that besides the particular and partial harmonies already mentioned, there is a universal harmony uniting the whole world in one system

² In the two following sections the difference between angelic and human activity is that the angels confer spiritual enlightenment and men receive it. Angels are in a state of attainment and men are passing through a process of attainment.

³ *Vide supra* on Introversion (p 88, n. 1)

⁴ They are united to God in the centre of their being, by ceaselessly entering into themselves. They help us by going forth, as it were, from themselves.

⁵ Their true self identity is rooted in God See Intr, pp 31 f.

⁶ $\eta \epsilon \iota \varsigma \epsilon \alpha \upsilon \tau \eta \nu \epsilon \iota \varsigma \theta \epsilon \omicron \varsigma$

⁷ In souls being unified and simplified. See Intr, p 25.

⁸ Cf. St Aug "ascendat per se supra se."

perfect Unity,¹ and thus leads it on unto the Beautiful and Good Which is beyond all things, and is One and is the Same, without beginning or end. (2) And the soul moves with a spiral motion whensoever (according to its capacity) it is enlightened with truths of Divine Knowledge, not in the special unity of its being² but by the process of its discursive reason and by mingled and alternative activities³ (3) And it moves straight forward when it does not enter into itself to feel the stirrings of its spiritual unity (for this, as I said, is the circular motion), but goes forth unto the things around it and feels an influence coming even from the outward world, as from a rich abundance of cunning tokens, drawing it unto the simple unity of contemplative acts⁴

10 These three motions, and also the similar motions we perceive in this material world and (far anterior to these) the individual permanence, rest and

¹ : e To the Angels and the perfected Saints There is a somewhat similar thought in Wordsworth's *Prelude* "To hold fit converse with the spiritual world / and with the generations of mankind / spread over time past, present, and to come / age after age till time shall be no more." This thought in Wordsworth and in D is an experience and not a speculation

² This spiritual unity was by later Mystical writers called the apex of the soul, or the ground, or the spark. Another name is *synteresis* or *synderesis*

³ There is an element of intuition in all discursive reasoning because all argument is based on certain axioms which are beyond proof (e.g. the law of universal causation) In fact the validity of our laws of thought is an axiom and therefore perceived by intuition In the present passage D means something deeper He means that formal Dogmatic Theology advances round a central core of spiritual experience by which it must constantly be verified, *Pectus facit theologum* Whenever theology even attempts to be purely deductive it goes wrong (e.g. Calvinism) If it is not rooted in intuition it will be rooted in fancies.

⁴ In D's classification Introversion and Sensation are both unmixed movements, for each leads to a kind of perception Discursive reasoning is a mixed movement because it does not lead to a direct perception and yet it must contain an element of perception.

grounding of each Kind¹ have their Efficient, Formal, and Final Cause in the Beautiful and Good, Which is above all rest and motion; through Which all rest and motion come; and from Which, and in Which, and unto Which, and for the sake of Which they are. For from It and through It are all Being and life of spirit and of soul, and hence in the realm of nature magnitudes both small, co-equal and great; hence all the measured order and the proportions of things, which, by their different harmonies, commingle into wholes made up of co-existent parts, hence this universe, which is both One and Many, the conjunctions of parts together, the unities underlying all multiplicity, and the perfections of the individual wholes, hence Quality, Quantity, Magnitude and Infinitude, hence fusions² and differentiations, hence all infinity and all limitation, all boundaries, ranks, transcendences,³ elements and forms, hence all Being, all Power, all Activity, all Condition,⁴ all Perception, all Reason, all Intuition, all Apprehension, all Understanding, All Communion⁵—in a word, all that *is* comes from the Beautiful and Good, hath its very existence in the Beautiful and Good, and turns towards the Beautiful and Good. Yea, all that exists and that comes into being, exists and comes into being because of the Beautiful and Good, and unto this Object all things gaze and by It are moved and are conserved, and for the sake of It, because of It and in It, existeth every originating Principle—be

¹ : e The types of things existent in the permanent spiritual world before the things were created in this transitory material world, the Platonic *Ideas*. There was also a Jewish belief in such a pre existence of things Cf Rev iv 11 (R. V)

² συγκαταμίξεις

³ ὑπεροχαί.

⁴ ἑνότης ⁵ ἐξέτις

The word is here used in the most comprehensive manner to include physical communion, sense-perception, and spiritual communion of souls with one another and with God

this Exemplar,¹ or be it Final or Efficient or Formal or Material Cause—in a word, all Beginning, all Conservation, and all Ending, or (to sum it up) all things that have being are derived from the Beautiful and Good Yea, and all things that have no substantial being² super-essentially exist in the Beautiful and Good this is the transcendent Beginning and the transcendent Goal of the universe. For, as Holy Scripture saith “Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things to whom be glory for ever Amen”³ And hence all things must desire and yearn for and must love the Beautiful and the Good Yea, and because of It and for Its sake the inferior things yearn for the superior under the mode of attraction, and those of the same rank have a yearning towards their peers under the mode of mutual communion, and the superior have a yearning towards their inferiors under the mode of providential kindness, and each hath a yearning towards itself under the mode of cohesion,⁴ and all things are moved by a longing for the Beautiful and Good, to accomplish every outward work and form every act of will And true reasoning will also dare to affirm that even the Creator of all things Himself yearneth after all things, createth all things, perfecteth all things, conserveth all things, attracteth all things, through

¹ The exemplar is the formal cause before this is actualized in the object embodying it. The principle in an oak tree constituting it an oak is the formal cause. But before there were any oak trees this principle existed as an exemplar. The final cause is the beneficent purpose the oak tree serves. In the Aristotelian classification exemplar and final cause would be classed together as final cause.

² This means either (1) that *actually* non-existent things (*e g* the flowers of next year which have not yet appeared, or those of last year, which are now dead) have an eternal place in God, or else (2) that *evil* things have their true being, under a different form, in Him

³ Rom xi 36

⁴ In the whole of this passage D is thinking primarily of Angels and men, or at least of sentient creatures. But he would see analogies of such activity in the inanimate material world

nothing but excess of Goodness. Yea, and the Divine Yearning is naught else than a Good Yearning towards the Good for the mere sake of the Good. For the Yearning which createth all the goodness of the world, being pre-existent abundantly in the Good Creator, allowed Him not to remain unfruitful in Himself, but moved Him to exert the abundance of His powers in the production of the universe.¹

11. And let no man think we are contradicting the Scripture when we solemnly proclaim the title of "Yearning." For 'tis, methinks, unreasonable and foolish to consider the phrases rather than the meaning, and such is not the way of them that wish for insight into things Divine, but rather of them that receive the empty sound without letting them pass beyond their ears, and shut them out, not wishing to know what such and such a phrase intendeth, nor how they ought to explain it in other terms expressing the same sense more clearly. Such men are under the dominion of senseless elements and lines, and of uncomprehended syllables and phrases which penetrate not into the perception of their souls, but make a dumb noise outside about their lips and hearing.

¹ εἰς τὸ πρᾶττικεῖσθαι κατὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην γεννητικῆς ἐκπεύλει. Desire = want. And want in us = imperfection, but in God it = the excess of perfection, whereby God is "Perfectionless." Thus the words "super excellence," "super unity," etc., are not meaningless superlatives. They imply an impulse towards motion within the Divine Stillness, a Thirst in the Divine Fullness. Cf. Julian of Norwich *Revelations*, ch. xxxi. "There is a property in God of thirst and longing." The categories of Greek Philosophy are static. The superlatives of D imply something dynamic, though the static element remains. In much modern philosophy (the Pragmatists and also Bergson) dynamic conceptions are prominent, but the tendency here is for the static to disappear instead of being subsumed as it is in D. The result, or the cause, is that Grace is lost sight of and only Nature is perceived. Really Absolutism and Pragmatism are not mutually exclusive, for Rest and Motion co-exist as transcended elements in God. This is the paradox of perfect Love which is both at rest and in motion, both satisfied and unsatisfied. Cf. Julian of Norwich. "I had Him and I wanted Him" (*Revelations*, ch. x).

holding it unlawful to explain the number "four" by calling it "twice two," or a straight line by calling it a "direct line" or the "Motherland" by calling it the "Fatherland," or so to interchange any other of those terms which under varieties of language possess all the same signification. Need is there to understand that in proper truth we do but use the elements and syllables and phrases and written terms and words as an aid to our senses, inasmuch as when our soul is moved by spiritual energies unto spiritual things, our senses, together with the thing which they perceive, are all superfluous, even as the spiritual faculties are also such when the soul, becoming Godlike,¹ meets in the blind embraces of an incomprehensible union the Rays of the unapproachable Light.² Now when the mind, through the things of sense, feels an eager stirring to mount towards spiritual contemplations,³ it values most of all those aids from its perceptions which have the plainest form, the clearest words, the things most distinctly seen, because, when the objects of sense are in confusion, then the senses themselves cannot present their message truly to the mind. But that we may not seem, in saying this, to be setting aside Holy Scripture, let those who blame the title of "Yearning" hear what the Scripture saith: "Yearn for her and she shall keep thee, exalt her and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her"⁴ And there are many

¹ θεοειδής

² This clause can only have been written by one for whom Unknowing was a personal experience. The previous clause shows how there is a negative element even in the Method of Affirmation. Sense-perception must first give way to spiritual intuition, just as this must finally give way to Unknowing. (Cf. St. John of the Cross's *Dark Night*, on three kinds of night.) All progress is a transcendence and so, in a sense, a *Via Negativa*. Cf. St. Aug., *Transcende mundum et sape animum, transcede animum et sape Deum*.

³ This shows that the *Via Negativa* starts from something positive. It is a transcendence, not a mere negation.

⁴ Prov. iv. 6, 8.

other such Scriptural passages which speak of this yearning

12. Nay, some of our writers about holy things have thought the title of "Yearning" diviner than that of "Love" Ignatius the Divine writes: "He whom I yearn for is crucified."¹ And in the "Introductions" of Scripture² thou wilt find some one saying concerning the Divine Wisdom "I yearned for her beauty." Let us not, therefore, shrink from this title of "Yearning," nor be perturbed and affrighted by aught that any man may say about it. For methinks the Sacred Writers regard the titles "Love" and "Yearning" as of one meaning; but preferred, when speaking of Yearning in a heavenly sense, to qualify it with the word "real"³ because of the inconvenient pre-notion of such men. For whereas the title of "Real Yearning" is employed not merely by ourselves but even by the Scriptures, mankind (not grasping the unity intended when Yearning is ascribed to God) fell by their own propensity into the notion

¹ ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως σταυρῶται Ignatius Ep ad Rom § 6 But possibly St. Ignatius means "My earthly affections are crucified." St. Ignatius wrote just before being martyred, at the beginning of the second century. This reference would alone be sufficient to make the authenticity of the Dionysian writings improbable

[It is perhaps impossible to determine whether Ignatius meant by the words "my Love is crucified" to refer to Jesus or to himself. The latter is supported by Zahn and by Lightfoot, the former by Origen, Prologue to Commentary on Canticles. "Nec puto quod culpari possit, si quis Deum, sicut Joannis, charitatur, ita ipse amorem nominat. Denejre memini, aliquem sanctorum dixisse Ignatium nomine de Christo Mens autem amor crucifixus est nec reprehendi eum per hoc dignum judico" Much further evidence is given in Jacobson's *Apostolic Fathers* (p 377) Jacobson himself supports it, observing that the Greek commemoration of Ignatius takes the words in this sense. Whether Dionysius followed Origen or not, his exposition is very interesting and is quite possibly the true. See also the translator's note on ἔρως ED]

² ἐν ταῖς προεισαγωγαῖς τῶν λόγων Apparently this was a title of the books ascribed to Solomon. The present reference is Wisdom viii. 2

³ τοῖς θεοῖς μᾶλλον ἀναθεῖναι τὸν θυτῶς ἔρωτα

of a partial, physical and divided quality, which is not true Yearning but a vain image of Real Yearning, or rather a lapse therefrom.¹ For mankind at large cannot grasp the simplicity of the one Divine Yearning, and hence, because of the offence it gives to most men, it is used concerning the Divine Wisdom to lead and raise them up to the knowledge of the Real Yearning until they are set free from all offence thereat, and often on the other hand when it was possible that base minds should suppose that which is not convenient, the word that is held in greater reverence is used concerning ourselves² "Thy love," says some one, "came upon me like as the love of women"³ To those who listen aright to Holy Scripture, the word "Love" is used by the Sacred Writers in Divine Revelation with the same meaning as the word "Yearning" It means a faculty of unifying and conjoining and of producing a special commingling together⁴ in the Beautiful and Good a faculty which pre-exists for the sake of the Beautiful and Good, and is diffused from this Origin and to this End, and holds together things of the same order by a mutual connection, and moves the highest to take thought for those below and fixes the inferior in a state which seeks the higher.

13 And the Divine Yearning brings ecstasy, not allowing them that are touched thereby to belong unto themselves but only to the objects of their affection This principle is shown by superior things

¹ Earthly desire is below static conditions, the Divine Desire is above them.

² *ε* The word *ἔρω*s is sometimes used concerning God to stimulate our minds by its unexpectedness and so to make us penetrate beyond the word to the mystery hinted at by it. On the other hand *ἀγάπη* or *ἀγάπησις* is sometimes used concerning human relationships to prevent any degrading associations from entering in.

³ 2 Sam 1. 26

⁴ καὶ ἐστὶ τοῦτο δυνάμει ἐνοποῦ καὶ συνδυετικῆς καὶ διαφερόντως συγκρατικῆς

through their providential care for their inferiors, and by those which are co-ordinate through the mutual bond uniting them, and by the inferior through their diviner tendency towards the highest. And hence the great Paul, constrained by the Divine Yearning, and having received a share in its ecstatic power, says, with inspired utterance, "I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me" true Sweetheart that he was and (as he says himself) being beside himself unto God, and not possessing his own life but possessing and loving the life of Him for Whom he yearned. And we must dare to affirm (for 'tis the truth) that the Creator of the Universe Himself, in His Beautiful and Good Yearning towards the Universe, is through the excessive yearning of His Goodness, transported outside of Himself in His providential activities towards all things that have being, and is touched by the sweet spell of Goodness, Love and Yearning, and so is drawn from His transcendent throne above all things, to dwell within the heart of all things, through a super-essential and ecstatic power whereby He yet stays within Himself¹. Hence Doctors call Him "jealous," because He is vehement in His Good Yearning towards the world, and because He stirs men up to a zealous search of yearning desire for Him, and thus shows Himself zealous inasmuch as zeal is always felt concerning things which are desired, and inasmuch as He hath a zeal concerning the creatures for which He careth. In short, both the Yearning and its Object belong to the Beautiful and the Good, and have therein their pre-existent roots and because of it exist and come into being.

14. But why speak the Sacred Writers of God sometimes as Yearning and Love, sometimes as the

¹ This finely suggests that the "Selfhood" of God is selfless. *Vide* Intr, p. 9. Note also the combination of rest and motion alluded to here.

Object of these emotions? In the one case He is the Cause and Producer and Begetter of the thing signified, in the other He is the Thing signified Itself. Now the reason why He is Himself on the one hand moved by the quality signified, and on the other causes motion by it,¹ is that He moves and leads onward Himself unto Himself² Therefore on the one hand they call Him the Object of Love and Yearning as being Beautiful and Good, and on the other they call Him Yearning and Love as being a Motive-Power leading all things to Himself, Who is the only ultimate Beautiful and Good—yea, as being His own Self-Revelation and the Bounteous Emanation of His own Transcendent Unity, a Motion of Yearning simple, self-moved, self-acting, pre-existent in the Good, and overflowing from the Good into creation, and once again returning to the Good And herein the Divine Yearning showeth especially its beginningless and endless nature, revolving in a perpetual circle for the Good, from the Good, in the Good, and to the Good, with unerring revolution, never varying its centre or direction, perpetually advancing and remaining and returning to Itself This by Divine inspiration our renowned Initiator hath declared in his *Hymns of Yearning*, which it will not be amiss to quote and thus to bring unto a holy consummation our Discourse concerning this matter

15 Words of the most holy Hierotheus from the *Hymns of Yearning* "Yearning (be it in God or Angel, or Spirit, or Animal Life, or Nature) must be

¹ Yearning is a movement in the soul, the Object of Yearning causes such movement in the soul

² Cf St Thomas Aquinas *Deus movet sicut desideratum a Se Ipso* Cf Spenser "He loved Himself because Himself was fair" Cf Plato's Doctrine of *ἔρως* This Yearning is eternally fulfilled in the Trinity Cf Dante "O somma luce che sola in Te sidi / sola T' intendi e da Te intelletta / ed intendente Te ami ed arridi" It is struggling towards actualization in this world

conceived of as an uniting and commingling power which moveth the higher things to a care for those below them, moveth co-equals to a mutual communion, and finally moveth the inferiors to turn towards their superiors in virtue and position "

16. Words of the same, from the same *Hymns of Yearning* "Forasmuch as we have set down in order the manifold yearnings springing from the One, and have duly explained what are the powers of knowledge and of action belonging to the yearnings springing from the One, and have duly explained what are the powers of knowledge and of action proper to the Yearnings within¹ the world and above² it (wherein, as hath been already explained, the higher place belongeth unto those ranks and orders of Yearning which are spiritually felt and perceived, and highest amongst these are the Divine Yearnings in the very core of the Spirit towards those Beauties which have their veritable Being Yonder),³ let us now yet further resume and compact them all together into the one and concentrated Yearning which is the Father of them all, and let us collect together into two kinds their general desiderative

^{1 2 c} The social instinct in men and animals, and the impulse of mutual attraction in the inanimate world.

² The manifold yearnings of the spirit for Truth, Beauty, Spiritual Love, etc.

^{2 2 c} Of the two classes just alluded to the second is the higher, and of those yearnings which belong to this class the most transcendent are the highest. Religion is higher than secular life, and the highest element in Religion is other-worldly.

The received text reads—

"The Divine Yearnings in the very core," etc., of *αὐτονόητοι καὶ θεοὶ τῶν ὅντων ἀκεῖ καλῶς ἐρώτων*. I have ventured to amend *ἐρώτων* to *ἐρωτες*. If the MS from which the received text is derived belonged to a family having seventeen or eighteen letters to a line then this word would probably come at the end of a line (since there are 260 letters to the end of it, from the beginning of the section), and would have the *ὄν-* of *ὄντων* just above it and the *-ον-* of *αὐτονόητοι* just above that, and *ἐρώτων* at the end of the line next but one above that. This would make the corruption of *ἐρωτες* into *ἐρώτων* very natural.

powers, over which the entire mastery and primacy is in that Incomprehensible Causation of all yearning which cometh from Beyond them all, and whereunto the universal yearning of all creatures presseth upwards according to the nature of each "

17 Words of the same, from the same *Hymns of Yearning* "Let us once more collect these powers into one and declare that there is but One Simple Power Which of Itself moveth all things to be mingled in an unity, starting from the Good and going unto the lowest of the creatures and thence again returning through all stages in due order unto the Good, and thus revolving from Itself, and through Itself and upon Itself¹ and towards Itself, in an unceasing orbit."

18 Now some one, perhaps, will say "If the

¹ "That which is not" = formless matter Plotinus (*Enn* 1 8 3) defines the Non-Existent as the world of sense perception It is, as it were, the stuff of which all things perceived by the senses are made This stuff cannot exist without some kind of "form," and therefore, if entirely bereft of all "form," would simply disappear into nothingness Thus, apart from that element of "form" which it derives from the Good, it is sheer-Non-Entity

Each individual thing consists of "matter" and "form"—i. e. of this indeterminate "stuff" and of the particular qualities belonging to that thing Remove those qualities and the thing is destroyed e. g. remove the colours, shape, etc., of a tree, and the tree becomes non-existent. It crumbles into dust, and thus the "stuff" takes on a new form. If, as M Le Bon maintains, material particles sometimes lose their material qualities and are changed into energy, in such a case the "stuff" takes on yet another kind of form The individual thing, in every case, becomes non-existent when it loses its "form," or the sum total of its individual qualities, but the "stuff" persists because it at once assumes another "form."

Hence this "stuff," being non-existent *per se*, draws its existence from the Good Which is the Source of all "form" And thus the existence of this non-existent stuff is ultimately contained in the Good.

D tries to prove that evil is non-existent by showing that there is nothing that can have produced it. Good cannot have produced it because a thing cannot produce its own opposite, evil cannot have produced itself because evil is always destructive and never productive All things that exist are produced by the Good or the desire for the Good—which comes to the same thing

Beautiful and Good is an Object of Yearning and desire and love to all (for even that which *is not* longs for It, as was said,¹ and strives to find its rest therein, and thus It creates a form even in formless things and thus is said super-essentially to *contain*, and does so *contain*, the non-existent)²—if this is so, how is it that the company of the devils desires not the Beautiful and Good, but, being inclined towards matter and fallen far from the fixed angelic state of desire for the Good, becomes a cause of all evils to itself and to all other beings which we describe as becoming evil? How is it that the devils, having been produced wholly out of the Good, are not good in disposition? Or how is it that, if produced good from out of the Good, they became changed?³ What made them

¹ The "matter" or stuff of which the universe is made, exists ultimately in the Good, but evil does not. All force exists ultimately in the Good, but the warping of it, or the lawlessness of it (which is the evil of it), does not exist in the Good. Force, or energy, as such is a relative embodiment of the Absolute evil as such is a contradiction of the Absolute

² *z e* There is an element of good in evil things enabling them to cohere and so to exist. In this passage "Non-Existent" is used in three senses (1) "Matter," or force, cannot exist without some form (which is its complement) and therefore is technically called non-existent. (2) Evil cannot exist at all on the ultimate plane of Being, nor in this world without an admixture of good (which is its contrary) and therefore is in an absolute sense non-existent. (3) The Good is beyond all existence and therefore is by transcendence Non-Existent.

³ The Good is beyond this world and beyond the stuff, or force, of which this world is made.

Evil, on the other hand, is below this world and the stuff composing it. Get rid of the limitations in this world (*sc* the difference between one quality and another) and you have an energy or force possessing all the particular qualities of things fused in one. Get rid of the limitations inherent in this (*z e* intensify it to infinity) and you have the Good. On the other hand, destroy some particular object (*e g* a tree), and that object, being now actually non-existent, has still a *potential* existence in the world stuff. Destroy that potential existence and you have absolute non existence, which is Evil.

Thus the three grades may be tabulated as follows

(1) Transcendent Non-Existence (= the Good)

(ii) Actual Non-Existence (= the world stuff, force or energy, of

evil, and indeed what is the nature of evil? From what origin did it arise and in what thing doth it lie? Why did He that is Good will to produce it? And how, having so willed, was He able so to do?¹ And if evil comes from some other cause, what other cause can anything have excepting the Good? How, if there is a Providence, doth evil exist, or arise at all, or escape destruction? And why doth anything in the world desire it instead of Good?"

19 Thus perhaps will such bewildered discourse speak. Now we will bid the questioner look towards the truth of things, and in the first place we will venture thus to answer "Evil cometh not of the Good, and if it cometh therefrom it is not evil. For even as fire cannot cool us, so Good cannot produce the things which are not good. And if all things that have being come from the Good (for it is natural to the Good to produce and preserve the creatures, and natural to evil to corrupt and to destroy them) then nothing in the world cometh of evil. Then evil can-

which material particles are a form. Modern science teaches that atoms have no actual existence. Thus the atomic theory has worked round to something very much like D's theory of the non-existent world stuff)

(iii) Absolute Non Existence (= Evil)

The three grades might be expressed by a numerical symbol as follows. If finite numbers represent the various forms of existence, the Infinity (which contradicts the laws of finite numbers) = the Good. Unity (which is a mere abstraction and cannot exist apart from multiplicity since every finite unit is divisible into parts) = the world stuff. Zero (which annihilates all finite numbers that are multiplied by it) = Evil.

¹ The argument in the rest of the section is as follows

Evil exists, for there is a radical difference between virtue and vice. Evil is, in fact, not merely negative, but positive not merely destructive, but also productive. And hence it is necessary to the perfection of the world. To which D replies in the next section that evil does not exist *qua* evil, nor is it positive or productive *qua* evil. It exists and is positive and productive solely through an admixture of the Good. (We might illustrate this by the fact that Zero, multiplied by Infinity, produces finite number.)

not even in any wise exist, if it act as evil upon itself. And unless it do so act, evil is not wholly evil, but hath some portion of the Good whereby it can exist at all. And if the things that have being desire the Beautiful and Good and accomplish all their acts for the sake of that which seemeth good, and if all that they intend hath the Good as its Motive and its Aim (for nothing looks unto the nature of evil to guide it in its actions), what place is left for evil among things that have being, or how can it have any being at all bereft of such good purpose? And if all things that have being come of the Good and the Good is Beyond things that have being, then, whereas that which exists not yet hath being in the Good, evil contrariwise hath none (otherwise it were not wholly evil or *Non-Ens*, for that which is wholly *Non-Ens* can be but naught except this be spoken Super-Essentially of the Good). So the Good must have Its seat far above and before that which hath mere being and that which hath not, but evil hath no place either amongst things that have being or things that have not, yea it is farther removed than the Non-Existent from the Good and hath less being than it. 'Then' (saith one perchance) 'whence cometh evil? For if' (saith he) 'evil is not, virtue and vice must needs be the same both in their whole entirety and in their corresponding particulars,'—i. e. even that which fighteth against virtue cannot be evil. And yet temperance is the opposite of debauchery, and righteousness of wickedness. And I mean not only the righteous and the unrighteous man, or the temperate and intemperate man, I mean that, even before the external distinction appeared between the virtuous man and his opposite, the ultimate distinction between the virtues and the vices hath existed long beforehand in the soul itself, and the passions war against the reason, and hence we must assume something evil

which is contrary to goodness For goodness is not contrary to itself, but, being come from One Beginning and being the offspring of One Cause, it rejoices in fellowship, unity, and concord Even the lesser Good is not contrary to the greater, for that which is less hot or cold is not contrary to that which is more so Wherefore evil lieth in the things that have being and possesseth being and is opposed and contrary to goodness And if evil is the destruction of things which have being, that depriveth it not of its own being. It itself still hath being and giveth being to its offspring. Yea, is not the destruction of one thing often the birth of another? And thus it will be found that evil maketh contribution unto the fullness of the world, and through its presence, saveth the universe from imperfection "

20 The true answer whereunto will be that evil (*qua* evil) causes no existence or birth, but only debases and corrupts, so far as its power extends, the substance of things that have being And if any one says that it is productive, and that by the destruction of one thing it giveth birth to somewhat else, the true answer is that it doth not so *qua* destructive *Qua* destructive and evil it only destroys and debases, but it taketh upon it the form of birth and essence through the action of the Good Thus evil will be found to be a destructive force in itself, but a productive force through the action of the Good *Qua* evil it neither hath being nor confers it, through the action of the Good, it hath being (yea, a good being) and confers being on good things Or rather (since we cannot call the same thing both good and bad in the same relations, nor are the destruction and birth of the same thing the same function or faculty, whether productive or destructive, working in the same relations), Evil in itself hath neither being, goodness, productiveness, nor power of creating things which have being

and goodness, the Good, on the other hand, wherever It becomes perfectly present, creates perfect, universal and untainted manifestations of goodness, while the things which have a lesser share therein are imperfect manifestations of goodness and mixed with other elements through lack of the Good. In fine, evil is not in any wise good, nor the maker of good; but every thing must be good only in proportion as it approacheth more or less unto the Good, since the perfect Goodness penetrating all things reacheth not only to the wholly good beings around It, but extendeth even unto the lowest things, being entirely present unto some, and in a lower measure to others, and unto others in lowest measure, according as each one is capable of participating therein¹. Some creatures participate wholly in the Good, others are lacking in It less or more, and others possess a still fainter participation therein, while to others the Good is present as but the faintest echo. For if the Good were not present only in a manner proportioned unto each, then the divinest and most honourable things would be no higher than the lowest! And how, pray, could all things have a uniform share in the Good, since not all are equally fit to share entirely therein? But in truth the exceeding greatness of the power of the Good is shown by this—that It giveth power even to the things which lack It, yea even unto that very lack itself, inasmuch as even here is to be found some kind of participation in It². And, if we must needs

¹ D is no pantheist. According to Pantheism God is *equally* present in all things. Thus Pantheism is a debased form of the Immanence doctrine, as Calvinism is a debased form of the Transcendence doctrine. In the one case we get Immanence without Transcendence in the other Transcendence without Immanence. D holds a Transcendent Immanence (cf Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, rebutting charge of Pantheism).

² e.g. The cruelty of Nature seems to show Intelligence, and Intelligence *per se* is a good thing.

boldly speak the truth, even the things that fight against It possess through Its power their being and their capability to fight. Or rather, to speak shortly, all creatures in so far as they have being are good and come from the Good, and in so far as they are deprived of the Good, neither are good nor have they being¹ For in the case of other qualities, such as heat or cold, the things which have been warmed have their being even when they lose their warmth, and many of the creatures there are which have no life or mind, and in like manner God transcendeth all being and so is Super-Essential,² and generally, in all other cases, though the quality be gone or hath never been present, the creatures yet have being and can subsist, but that which is utterly bereft of the Good never had, nor hath, nor ever shall have, no nor can have any sort of being whatever For instance, the depraved sinner, though bereft of the Good by his brutish desire, is in this respect unreal and desires unrealities, but still he hath a share in the Good in so far as there is in him a distorted reflection of true Love and Communion³ And anger hath a share in the Good, in so far as it is a movement which seeks to remedy apparent evils, converting them to that which appears to be fair And even he that desires the basest life, yet in so far as he feels desire at all and feels desire for life, and intends what he thinks the best kind of life, so far participates in the Good And if you wholly destroy the Good, there will be neither being, life, desire, nor motion, or any other thing Hence the birth of fresh

¹ All evil things contain the seed of their own decay, and so tend to non existence. The arrogance and cruelty of the Germans has been their weakness, as discipline and self-sacrifice has been their strength

² God exists without Essence, as an object can exist without this particular quality or that

³ D is thinking especially of carnal sin Such sin is a depraved form of that which, in its true purity, is a mystery, symbolizing the Unitive Life.

life out of destruction is not the function of evil but is the presence of Good in a lesser form, even as disease is a disorder, yet not the destruction of all order, for if this happen the disease itself will not exist.¹ But the disease remains and exists Its essence is order reduced to a *minimum*, and in this it consists For that which is utterly without the Good hath neither being nor place amongst the things that are in being, but that which is of mixed nature owes to the Good its place among things in being, and hath this place amongst them and hath being just so far as it participates in the Good Or rather all things in being will have their being more or less in proportion as they participate in the Good For so far as mere Being is concerned, that which hath not being in any respect will not exist at all, that which hath being in one respect but not in another doth not exist in so far as it hath fallen away from the everlasting Being, while in so far as it hath a share of being, to that extent it exists, and thus both an element of existence and an element of non-existence in it are kept and preserved. So too with evil That which is utterly fallen from Good can have no place either in the things which are more good or in the things which are less so That which is good in one respect but not in another is at war with some particular good but not with the whole of the Good It also is preserved by the admixture of the Good, and thus the Good giveth existence to the lack of Itself through some element of Itself being present there For if the Good be entirely removed, there will not remain aught at all, either good or mixed or absolutely bad For if evil is imperfect Goodness, the perfect absence of the Good will remove both the perfect and the imperfect Good, and evil will only exist and appear because, while it is evil in relation to one kind of good (being the contrary

¹ A diseased body still lives Death ends the disease

thereof), yet it depends for its existence on another kind of good and, to that extent, is good itself. For things of the same kind cannot¹ be wholly contradictory to one another in the same respects.² Hence evil is Non-Existent.

21 Neither inhereth evil in existent creatures.³ For if all creatures are from the Good, and the Good is in them all and embraces them all, either evil can have no place amongst the creatures, or else it must have a place in the Good.⁴ Now it cannot inhere in the Good, any more than cold can inhere in fire, just so the quality of becoming evil cannot inhere in that which turns even evil into good. And if evil doth inhere in the Good, what will the mode of its inherence be? If you say It cometh of the Good, I answer That is absurd and impossible. For (as the infallible Scriptures say), a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor yet is the converse possible. But if it cometh not of the Good, it is plainly from another origin and cause. Either evil must come from the Good, or the Good from evil, or else (if this is impossible) both the Good and evil must be from another origin or cause. For no duality can be an origin: some unity must be the origin of all duality. And yet it is absurd to suppose that two entirely

¹ Exuberant vitality is *per se* a good thing and the more exuberant the better, though, like all good things, it is dangerous, and unless properly directed is disastrous.

² If good and evil are both existent, they are, to that extent, both of the same kind, which is impossible.

³ So far D has been showing that evil is not an *ultimate* principle, being neither (1) identical with the Good, nor (2) self-subsistent. Now he argues that it is not a necessary element in any created thing, neither in their existence as such, nor in any particular kind of creature.

⁴ D rambles characteristically, but the general argument is plain. All existence is from the Good. Hence, if evil is inherent in the nature of existence, evil is from the Good. Thus D meets again and proceeds to lay the ghost of a theory which he has already elaborately slain in the previous section.

opposite things can owe their birth and their being to the same thing. This would make the origin itself not a simple unity but divided, double, self-contradictory and discordant. Nor again is it possible that the world should have two contradictory origins, existing in each other and in the whole and mutually at strife. For,¹ were this assumed, God² cannot be free from pain, nor without a feeling of ill, since there would be something causing Him trouble, yea, all things must in that case be in a state of disorder and perpetual strife, whereas the Good imparts a principle of harmony to all things and is called by the Sacred Writers Peace and the Bestower of Peace. And hence it is that all good things display a mutual attraction and harmony, and are the offspring of one Life and are disposed in fellowship towards one Good, and are kindly, of like nature, and benignant to one another. And so evil is not in God,³ and is not divine. Nor cometh it of God. For either He is not good, or else He worketh goodness and bringeth good things unto

¹ Having just given a metaphysical argument for the non-existence of evil, D now gives an argument drawn from the actual nature of the universe and of God's creative activity.

This argument is not so satisfactory as the metaphysical one, for, under all the harmony of the world, there is perpetual strife, and the Cross of Christ reveals God as suffering pain. "Christ is in an agony and will be till the end of the world" (*Pascal*).

The metaphysical argument is sound because metaphysics deal with ultimate ideals, and evil is ultimately or ideally non-existent. The argument from actual facts is unsound because evil is actually existent. Much wrong thinking on the subject of evil is due to a confusion of ideal with actual non-existence. D here seems to fall into this mistake.

² D here uses the name "God" because he is thinking of the Absolute or the Good, not in Its ultimate Nature, but in Its emanating or creative activity, in which the Personal Differentiations of the Trinity appear. See II 7.

³ i.e. Evil does not arise through the passage of the Good from Super-Essence into Essence. It is not in the Good through the Good submitting to the conditions of existence (D has already shown that evil has no place in the ultimate Super-Essential Nature of the Good).

existence Nor acts He thus only at some times and not at others, or only in the case of some things but not of all For were He to act thus, He must suffer a change and alteration, and that in respect of the divinest quality of all—causality And if the Good is in God as His very substance, God must, in changing from the Good, sometimes exist and sometimes not exist. Doubtless if you feign that He hath the Good by mere participation therein, and derives It from another, in that case He will, forsooth, sometimes possess It and sometimes not possess It¹ Evil, therefore, doth not come from God, nor is it in God either absolutely or temporally²

22 Neither inhereth evil in the angels³ For if the good angel declares the Divine Goodness, he is in a secondary manner and by participation that which the Subject of his message is in a primary and causal manner⁴ And thus the angel is an image of God, a manifestation of the invisible light, a burnished mirror, bright, untarnished, without spot or blemish, receiving (if it is reverent to say so) all the beauty of the Absolute Divine Goodness, and (so far as may be) kindling in itself, with unallowed radiance, the Goodness of the Secret Silence. Hence evil inhereth not in the angels, they are evil only in so far as they must punish sinners But in this respect even those who chastise wrong-doers are evil, and so are the priests who exclude the profane man from the Divine

¹ This is a *reductio ad absurdum* D considers it obvious that God possesses the Good as His Substance and not by participation The Persons of the Trinity are not products of the Absolute but Emanations or Differentiations of It.

² The argument is as follows No evil is from God All existence is from God. Therefore no existence is evil

³ Having shown that existence as such is not inherently evil, D now takes various forms of existence and shows that none of them is, as such, inherently evil

⁴ Cf Old Testament title, "Sons of God," and D on Deification. Cf also "I have said, Ye are Gods"

Mysteries But, indeed, 'tis not the suffering of the punishment that is evil but the being worthy thereof, nor yet is a just exclusion from the sacrifices evil, but to be guilty and unholy and unfit for those pure mysteries is evil

23 Nor are the devils naturally evil For, were they such, they would not have sprung from the Good, nor have a place amongst existent creatures, nor have fallen from Goodness (being by their very nature always evil) Moreover, are they evil with respect to themselves or to others? If the former¹ they must also be self-destructive, if the latter, how do they destroy, and what do they destroy?² Do they destroy Essence, or Faculty, or Activity?³ If Essence, then, first, they cannot destroy it contrary to its own nature, for they cannot destroy things which by their nature are indestructible, but only the things which are capable of destruction And, secondly, destruction itself is not evil in every case and under all circumstances Nor can any existent thing be destroyed so far as its being and nature act; for its destruction is due to a failure of its natural order, whereby the principle of harmony and symmetry grows weak and so cannot remain unchanged⁴ But

¹ : *e* If *totally* and *essentially* by *very nature* evil with respect to themselves In so far as they continue to exist they are good with respect to themselves

² Evil is the contrary of the Good Hence since the Good is by its very nature productive, evil must be destructive Hence the devils, if essentially evil, must be essentially destructive. Now they are not essentially self destructive, for, were they such, they could not exist. Therefore, if essentially evil, they must under all circumstances be destructive of other things

³ The essence of (*e g*) an apple tree is self-identity, its faculty is its latent power of producing leaves, apples, etc, its activity is the actual production of the leaves, apples, etc

⁴ (1) The devils do not destroy *all* things (*e g* they do not annihilate the human soul) Therefore they are not *essentially* evil. Evil passions are good things misdirected (2) Often the destruction of a thing is beneficial (*e g* the falling of the faded leaf) In fact, nothing could be

the weakness is not complete ; for, were it complete, it would have annihilated both the process of destruction and the object which suffers it : and such a destruction as this must be self-destructive. Hence such a quality is not evil but imperfect good ; for that which is wholly destitute of the Good can have no place among things that have being¹ And the same is true of destruction when it works upon a faculty or activity Moreover, how can the devils be evil since they are sprung from God ? For the Good produceth and createth good things But it may be said that they are called evil not in so far as they exist (for they are from the Good and had a good existence given them), but in so far as they do not exist, having been unable (as the Scripture saith) to keep their original state For in what, pray, do we consider the wickedness of the devils to consist except their ceasing from the quality and activity of divine virtues ? Otherwise, if the devils are naturally evil, they must be always evil. But evil is unstable² Hence if they are always in the same condition, they are not evil, for to remain always the same is a property of the Good But if they are not always evil, then they are not evil by their natural constitution, but only through a lack of angelic virtues³ Hence they are not utterly without the Good, seeing that they exist and live and form intuitions and have

destroyed if it had not grown feeble and so become worthy to be destroyed (D here, in his zeal to explain evil away, countenances the base doctrine that might is right What is wrong with the whole system of the universe is that its underlying law is the survival of the fittest. The enlightened conscience of humanity rebels against this law)

¹ The weakness is an imperfect good, and therefore the process of destruction which co operates with the weakness is an imperfect good

² The Good is permanent Hence its contrary must be unstable.

³ Evil is essentially a negative and self-contradictory thing Its very permanence would be opposed to its own nature and would be due to an element of the Good within it.

within them any movement of desire at all ; but they are called evil because they fail in the exercise of their natural activity. The evil in them is therefore a warping, a declension from their right condition, a failure, an imperfection, an impotence, and a weakness, loss and lapse of that power which would preserve their perfection in them. Moreover what is the evil in the devils? Brutish wrath, blind desire, headstrong fancy. But these qualities, even though they exist in the devils, are not wholly, invariably, and essentially evil. For in other living creatures, not the possession of these qualities but their loss is destructive of the creature and hence is evil, while their possession preserves the creature and enables the creature possessing them to exist. Hence the devils are not evil in so far as they fulfil their nature, but in so far as they do not. Nor hath the Good bestowed complete upon them been changed, rather have they fallen from the completeness of that gift. And we maintain that the angelic gifts bestowed upon them have never themselves suffered change, but are unblemished in their perfect brightness, even if the devils themselves do not perceive it through blinding their faculties of spiritual perception¹. Thus, so far as their existence is concerned, they possess it from the Good, and are naturally good, and desire the Beautiful and Good in desiring existence, life, and intuition, which are existent things. And they are called evil through the deprivation and the loss whereby they have lapsed from their proper virtues. And hence they are evil in so far as they do not exist ; and in desiring evil they desire that which is non-existent.

24. But perhaps some one will say that human

¹ There is a timeless ground in all personalities, and this ground is good. Eckhart and Tauler say that even the souls in hell possess eternally the divine root of their true being. Ruysbroeck says, this divine root does not of itself make us blessed, but merely makes us exist.

souls are the seat of evil. Now if the reason alleged is that they have contact with evil temptations when they take forethought to preserve themselves therefrom, this is not evil but good and cometh from the Good that turns even evil into good. But if we mean the depravation which souls undergo, in what do they undergo depravation except in the deficiency of good qualities and activities and in the failure and fall therefrom due to their own weakness? Even so we say that the air is darkened around us by a deficiency and absence of the light, while yet the light itself is always light and illuminates the darkness. Hence the evil inhereth not in the devils or in us, *as* evil, but only as a deficiency and lack of the perfection of our proper virtues.

25 Neither inhereth evil in the brute beasts. For if you take away the passions of anger, desire, etc (which are not in their essential nature evil, although alleged to be so), the lion, having lost its savage wildness, will be a lion no longer; and the dog, if it become gentle to all, will cease to be a dog, since the virtue of a dog is to watch and to allow its own masters to approach while driving strangers away. Wherefore 'tis not evil for a creature so to act as preserveth its nature undestroyed; evil is the destruction of its nature, the weakness and deficiency of its natural qualities, activities, and powers. And if all things which the process of generation produces have their goal of perfection in time, then even that which seemeth to be their imperfection is not wholly and entirely contrary to nature.¹

26 Neither inhereth evil in nature as a whole. For if all natural laws together come from the universal system of Nature, there is nothing contrary to Nature.²

¹ : c That which is imperfect in them is capable of being made perfect

² The sum total of natural laws comes from the ultimate unity of

'Tis but when we consider the nature of particular things, that we find one part of Nature to be natural and another part to be unnatural. For one thing may be unnatural in one case, and another thing in another case, and that which is natural in one is unnatural in another.¹ Now the evil taint of a natural force is something unnatural. It is a lack of the thing's natural virtues. Hence, no natural force is evil: the evil of nature lies in a thing's inability to fulfil its natural functions.²

27 Neither inhereth evil in our bodies. For ugliness and disease are a deficiency in form and a want of order. But this is not wholly evil, being rather a lesser good. For were there a complete destruction of beauty, form, and order, the very body must disappear. And that the body is not the cause of evil in the soul is plain in that evil can be nigh at hand even without a body, as it is in the devils. Evil in spirits' souls and bodies is a weakness and lapse in the condition of their natural virtues.

28 Nor is the familiar notion true that "Evil inheres in matter *qua* matter." For matter, too, hath a share in order, beauty, and form. And if matter is without these things, and in itself hath no quality or form, how can it produce anything, since in that case it hath not of itself even the power of suffering any affection? Nay, how can matter be

Nature, which comes from the Good. Thus the sum total of natural laws is not, as such, opposed to the ultimate unity of Nature, and therefore is not as such opposed to the Good. It is not *essentially* evil.

¹ Cf. Section 30

² The argument of the whole passage is that evil is not inherent in the essential nature of things as a whole or of any particular thing. It arises in particular things (accidentally, as it were) through their failure to fulfil their true nature. But what of this accident? Is it inherent? Perhaps we might answer, "Not inherent because capable of being eliminated."

evil? For if it hath no being whatever, it is neither good nor evil, but if it hath a kind of being, then (since all things that have being come from the Good) matter must come from the Good. And thus either the Good produces evil (*i e* evil, since it comes from the Good, is good), or else the Good Itself is produced by evil (*i e* the Good, as coming thus from evil, is evil). Or else we are driven back again to two principles. But if so, these must be derived from some further single source beyond them. And if they say that matter is necessary for the whole world to fulfil its development, how can that be evil which depends for its existence upon the Good? For evil abhors the very nature of the Good. And how can matter, if it is evil, produce and nourish Nature? For evil, *qua* evil, cannot produce or nourish anything, nor create or preserve it at all. And if they reply that matter causes not the evil in our souls, but that it yet draws them down towards evil, can that be true? For many of them have their gaze turned towards the Good. And how can that be, if matter doth nothing except drag them down towards evil? Hence evil in our souls is not derived from matter but from a disordered and discordant motion. And if they say that this motion is always the consequence of matter, and if the unstable medium of matter is necessary for things that are incapable of firm self-subsistence, then *why* is it that evil is thus necessary or that this necessary thing is evil? ¹

29 Nor is the common saying true that Deprivation or Lack fights by its natural power against the Good. For a complete lack is utterly impotent, and that

¹ Matter, it is argued, is *evil* because the discordant motion of the soul springs from matter. But, replies D, matter is *necessary* for certain kinds of existence. Hence it follows that evil is necessary. But this is impossible.

which is partial hath its power, not in so far as it is a lack, but in so far as it is not a perfect lack. For when the lack of the Good is partial, evil is not as yet; and when it becomes perfect, evil itself utterly vanishes.

30. In fine, Good cometh from the One universal Cause; and evil from many partial deficiencies. God knows evil under the form of good, and with Him the causes of evil things are faculties productive of good. And if evil is eternal, creative, and powerful, and if it hath being and activity, whence hath it these attributes? Come they from the Good? Or from the evil by the action of the Good? Or from some other cause by the action of them both? All natural results arise from a definite cause; and if evil hath no cause or definite being, it is unnatural. For that which is contrary to Nature hath no place in Nature, even as unskilfulness hath no place in skilfulness. Is the soul, then, the cause of evils, even as fire is the cause of warmth? And doth the soul, then, fill with evil whatsoever things are near it? Or is the nature of the soul in itself good, while yet in its activities the soul is sometimes in one state, and sometimes in another?¹ Now, if the very existence of the soul is naturally evil, whence is that existence derived? From the Good Creative Cause of the whole world? If from this Origin, how can it be, in its essential nature, evil? For all things sprung from out this Origin are good. But if it is evil merely in its activities, even so this condition is not fixed. Otherwise (i.e. if it doth not itself also assume a good quality) what is the origin of the virtues?²

¹ D is here alluding to the mystical doctrine of the timeless self—the ultimate root of goodness in each individual which remains unchanged by the failures and sins of the temporal self.

² D is arguing with those who hold that evil is in some sense necessary to the existence of the world, and therefore has a permanent place in it. Sin is, they hold, a necessary self-realization of human

There remains but one alternative. Evil is a weakness and deficiency of Good

31 Good things have all one cause. If evil is opposed to the Good, then hath evil many causes. The efficient causes of evil results, however, are not any laws and faculties, but an impotence and weakness and an inharmonious mingling of discordant elements. Evil things are not immutable and unchanging but indeterminate and indefinite the sport of alien influences which have no definite aim. The Good must be the beginning and the end even of all evil things. For the Good is the final Purpose of all things, good and bad alike. For even when we act amiss we do so from a longing for the Good, for no one makes evil his definite object when performing any action. Hence evil hath no substantial being, but only a shadow thereof, since the Good, and not itself, is the ultimate object for which it comes into existence.

32 Unto evil we can attribute but an accidental kind of existence. It exists for the sake of something else, and is not self-originating. And hence our action appears to be right (for it hath Good as its object) while yet it is not really right (because we mistake for good that which is not good). 'Tis proven, then, that our purpose is different from our action. Thus evil is contrary to progress, purpose, nature, cause, principle, end, law, will, and being. Evil is, then, a lack, a deficiency, a weakness, a disproportion, an error, purposeless, unlovely, lifeless, unwise, unreasonable, imperfect, unreal, causeless, indeterminate, sterile, inert, powerless, disordered, incongruous, indefinite, dark, unsubstantial, and never in itself possessed of any existence whatever. How,

souls which are in their ultimate essence sinless. D replies that, if this is so, we cannot explain how goodness can ever be (as it is) a form of self realization for human souls

then, is it that an admixture of the Good bestows any power upon evil? For that which is altogether destitute of Good is nothing and hath no power. And if the Good is Existent and is the Source of will, power, and action, how can Its opposite (being destitute of existence, will, power, and activity), have any power against It? Only because evil things are not all entirely the same in all cases and in all relations¹ In the case of a devil evil lieth in the being contrary to spiritual goodness, in the soul it lieth in the being contrary to reason; in the body it lieth in the being contrary to nature

33 How can evil things have any existence at all if there is a Providence? Only because evil (as such) hath no being, neither inhereth it in things that have being And naught that hath being is independent of Providence, for evil hath no being at all, except when mingled with the Good And if no thing in the world is without a share in the Good, and evil is the deficiency of Good and no thing in the world is utterly destitute of Good, then the Divine Providence is in all things, and nothing that exists can be without It. Yea, even the evil effects that arise are turned by Providence to a kindly purpose, for the succour of themselves or others (either individually or in common), and thus it is that Providence cares individually for each particular thing in all the world. Therefore we shall pay no heed to the fond argument so often heard that "Providence shall lead us unto virtue even against our will." 'Tis not worthy of Providence to violate nature. Wherefore Its Providential character is shown herein. that It preserves the nature of each individual, and, in making provision for the free and independent, it hath respect unto their state, providing, both in general and in

¹ i. e. Evil things are not *entirely* bad, but are bad only in some partial aspect.

particular, according as the nature of those It cares for can receive Its providential benefactions, which are bestowed suitably on each by Its multiform and universal activity

34. Thus evil hath no being, nor any inherence in things that have being Evil is nowhere *qua* evil; and it arises not through any power but through weakness Even the devils derive their existence from the Good, and their mere existence is good Their evil is the result of a fall from their proper virtues, and is a change with regard to their individual state, a weakness of their true angelical perfections And they desire the Good in so far as they desire existence, life, and understanding, and in so far as they do not desire the Good, they desire that which hath no being And this is not desire, but an error of real desire

35 By "men who sin knowingly" Scripture means them that are weak in the *exercised* knowledge¹ and performance of Good, and by "them that know the Divine Will and do it not,"² it means them that have heard the truth and yet are weak in faith to trust the Good or in action to fulfil it.³ And some desire not to have understanding in order that they may do good, so great is the warping or the weakness of their will And, in a word, evil (as we have often said) is weakness, impotence, and deficiency of

¹ περί τὴν ἀληστον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ γνῶσιν

² Luke xii 47

³ In the previous section D has maintained that all people ultimately desire the Good Hence it follows that all sin is due to ignorance, for could we all recognize that which we desire we would follow it This raises the question What, then, does Scripture mean by speaking of men who sin knowingly? To this D replies that wilful sin is wilful ignorance It is the failure to exercise the knowledge we possess as when we know a fact which yet is not actually present to our minds. We know (having been taught it) the desirableness of the Good, but we can shut this desirableness out from our minds and refuse to dwell upon it In such a case we refuse to exercise our knowledge

knowledge (or, at least, of exercised knowledge), or of faith, desire, or activity as touching the Good. Now, it may be urged that weakness should not be punished, but on the contrary should be pardoned. This would be just were the power not within man's grasp, but if the power is offered by the Good that giveth without stint (as saith the Scripture) that which is needful to each, we must not condone the wandering or defection, desertion, and fall from the proper virtues offered by the Good. But hereon let that suffice which we have already spoken (to the best of our abilities) in the treatise *Concerning Justice and Divine Judgment*:¹ a sacred exercise wherein the Truth of Scripture disallowed as lunatic babbling such nice arguments as despitefully and slanderously blaspheme God. In this present treatise we have, to the best of our abilities, celebrated the Good as truly Admirable, as the Beginning and the End of all things, as the Power that embraces them, as That Which gives form to non-existent things, as That which causes all good things and yet causes no evil things, as perfect Providence and Goodness surpassing all things that are and all that are not, and turning base things and the lack of Itself unto good, as That Which all must desire, yearn for, and love; and as possessed of many other qualities the which a true argument hath, methinks, in this chapter expounded.

¹ This treatise is lost.

